



John M. Yelton

Books printed for BENJ. DOD.

A Short and plain Instruction for the better understanding of the Lord's Supper ; with the necessary Preparation required. — For the Benefit of young Communicants, and of all such as have not well considered this Holy Ordinance. To which is annexed, The whole Office of the Holy Communion ; with proper Helps and Directions for joining in every Part of it with Understanding and Benefit.. The 10th Edition. By the Right Rev Father in God *Thomas*, Lord Bishop of *Sodor and Man*.

The Knowledge and Practice of Christianity made easy to the meanest Capacities ; or, An Essay towards an Instruction of the Indians, &c. in twenty short and plain Dialogues, for the Use of all such Christians as have not well considered the Meaning of the Religion they profess, or who profess to know God, but in Works do deny him. To which is annexed, The true Method of keeping the Lord's Day holy ; with Family and private Devotions. The Eighth Edition. By the same Author.

The Arguments of the Books and Chapters of the Holy Bible, with practical Observations. By *J. F. Ostervald* Professor of Divinity, and one of the Ministers of the Church at *Neufchatel* in *Switzerland* ; and by him presented to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge. In Three Vols. 8vo. Price 12 s.

Mr. *Ostervald's* Grounds and Principles of the Christian Religion explained. Translated into English, and revised by Dr. *Stanhope*. Price 2 s.

The Practice of true Devotion ; divided into Chapters ; each containing some principal Duty. With Prayers on several Occasions. By *Robert Nelson*, Esq. Price 2 s. 6 d.

Dr. *Worthington's* great Duty of Self-resignation to the divine Will : With his Character by Bishop *Tillotson*. Price 1 s. 6 d.

Peer's Companion for the Aged : With Meditations, Devotions, and proper Instructions. Price 8 d.

Bp. *Kidder's* Young Man's Duty . Designed for young Persons, before they are debauched by evil Company, &c. Price 9 d.

The Life of God in the Soul of Man ; or, The Nature and Excellency of the Christian Religion. With a Preface by Bp. *Burnet*. Price 1 s. 6 d.

The exemplary Life and Character of *James Bonnell*, Esq; late Accomptant-General of *Ireland* : With the Bp. of *Kilmore's* Sermon at his Funeral. Price 2 s.

N. B. All these Books are recommended and dispersed by the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.

A
V I E W
Of the PRINCIPAL
DEISTICAL WRITERS
OF THE
Last and Present CENTURY.

V O L. II.

CONTAINING
O B S E R V A T I O N S
O N
Mr. *HUME*'s PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS;
AND
A DEFENCE OF NATURAL and REVEALED
RELIGION,
Against the Attempts made upon Both in the Post-
HUMOUS WORKS of the late Lord Viscount
BOLINGBROKE.

WITH
A CONCLUSION, in an ADDRESS to
DEISTS and PROFESSED CHRISTIANS.

By *JOHN LELAND*, D. D.

L O N D O N :

Printed for B. DODD, at the *Bible and Key* in *Ave-Mary-
Lane*, near *Stationers-Hall*.

M.DCC.LV.

W E I V

Of the Principal

DEISTICAL WRITERS

311270

ciples of what is usually called natural religion. It was thought therefore that to complete the design I had proposed in publishing the *View of the Deistical Writers*, it would be proper to add a supplement to it relating to the writings of Mr. *Hume* and the late Lord *Bolingbroke*: And that the observations upon them might in that case be more large and particular, than could be expected where a number of writers came under consideration. This was the opinion and advice of some persons, for whose judgment and friendship I have a great regard. This is my apology for appearing again so soon in a controversy, in which otherwise I might perhaps have seemed to be too forward. It was some time after the late Lord *Bolingbroke's* works were published before I had an opportunity of seeing them. And when I had read them, I found that a distinct and particular consideration of them, which was what was expected of me, would take a much greater compass than I had intended. Accordingly this, with the observations on Mr. *Hume*, have made this part of the work so large, that it exceeds the former in bulk, to which it was intended only as a supplement. The length of the work has given me some concern, as I am not without apprehension that it may exercise the patience of the reader, as well as stand in need of his indulgence: And yet several things which I had prepared are here omitted, for fear of being too tedious. There are some things
in

P R E F A C E.

in the first part of the observations on Mr. *Hume*, which would scarce have deserved to be particularly insisted upon, were it not that they may serve to let the reader into a juster notion of the character and views of that author. Those observations have been also considerably enlarged by the reflections made on the miracles of the *Abbè de Paris*, which therefore I had thoughts of omitting, but I found others were of opinion they might be both agreeable and useful. As to Lord *Bolingbroke*, the many passages extracted out of his works, and the comparing them carefully together, have contributed to lengthen this part of the work; but it could not well be avoided, as I was willing to lay his sentiments before the reader in his own words, that it might appear they were fairly represented. He so frequently seems to contradict in one place what he hath advanced in another, that it is often no easy matter to come at his real sentiments. But I have no-where willingly disguised or misrepresented them, nor have concealed the strength of any of his arguments. It would have rendered this work still longer, if I had insisted largely and distinctly on the proofs by which the divine authority of the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and of the revelation there contained, is established. But this has been often done by others to great advantage. And I have endeavoured, as far as I was able, in some former treatises, to place those proofs in a proper light.

P R E F A C E.

All that seemed to me to be necessary on the present occasion was to take off the force of those objections, which have been advanced with a peculiar confidence by an author of no small note, who appears to have been under no restraints, and to have been determined to push his objections with all the strength of reason, and vivacity of imagination, that he was master of.

Since the finishing of this work, I find there have been other answers to Lord *Bolingbroke* published, which probably may have rendered this less necessary. As I live at a great distance from the place of their publication, I have not yet had the advantage of seeing any of them.

It may reasonably be supposed, that the reader will meet with many things here which are already considered in those answers. But I have sometimes observed, that different answers have, instead of interfering, tended to illustrate and confirm one another. The subject has by this means had the advantage of being placed in various lights, and accommodated to readers of different tastes : And what has been slightly passed over by one author has been more fully and distinctly considered by another.

The former volume of this work is now republished with additions and alterations, of the reasons of which some account has been given in an advertisement prefixed to the new edition. A work of that nature admits, and often requires some things of this kind. But that there
may

P R E F A C E.

vii

may be no just ground of complaint, care has been taken to print those additions and alterations separately, for the use of those who are possessed of the first edition.

I have nothing farther to add here, but that as the volume which is now offered to the public, may be regarded as a continuation of the former, it is conducted, as that was, in a series of letters, which were written and sent by me to my worthy friend the Rev. Dr. *Wilson* *, in the form in which they now appear.

* See preface to the first volume.





THE CONTENTS

Of the SECOND VOLUME.

LETTER I.

Mr. Hume a subtil and ingenious writer, but extremely sceptical, and fond of novelty. He proposes to free metaphysics from that jargon and obscurity, which has served only as a shelter to superstition and error. His doctrine concerning the relation between Cause and Effect, examined. He declares, that the knowledge of this relation is of the highest importance, and that all our reasonings concerning matter of fact and experience, and concerning the existence of any Being, are founded upon it. Yet he sets himself to shew that there is no real connexion between Cause and Effect, and that there can be no certain, nor even probable reasoning from the one to the other. Reflections upon the great absurdity and pernicious tendency of this scheme. The inconsistencies this writer hath fallen into.

LETTER II.

Observations on Mr. Hume's essay concerning a particular providence and a future state. His attempt to shew that we cannot justly argue from the works of nature to an intelligent cause, because the subject lies entirely beyond the reach of our own experience; and because God is a singular cause, and the universe a singular

THE CONTENTS.

Singular effect, and therefore we cannot argue by a comparison with any other cause or any other effect. His argument examined, whereby he pretends to prove, that since we know God only by the effects in the works of nature, we can judge of his proceedings no farther than we now see of them, and therefore cannot infer any rewards or punishments beyond what is already known to us by experience and observation. The great usefulness of believing future retributions acknowledged by Mr. Hume, and that the contrary doctrine is inconsistent with good policy.

LETTER III.

An examination of Mr. Hume's essay on miracles. A summary of the first part of that essay, which is designed to shew that miracles are incapable of being proved by any testimony or evidence whatsoever. His main principle examined, that experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact: and that miracles being contrary to the established laws of nature, there is an uniform experience against the existence of any miracle. It is shewn, that no argument can be drawn from experience to prove that miracles are impossible, or that they have not been actually wrought. Miracles not above the power of God, nor unworthy of his wisdom. Valuable ends may be assigned for miracles. They are capable of being proved by proper testimony. This applied to the resurrection of Christ. And it is shewn, that the evidence represented in Scripture is every way sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of it, supposing that evidence to have been really given as there represented.

LETTER IV.

Reflections on the second part of Mr. Hume's essay on miracles, which is designed to shew, that in fact there

THE C O N T E N T S.

never was a miraculous event established upon such evidence as can reasonably be depended upon. What he offers concerning the necessary conditions and qualifications of witnesses in the case of miracles considered. It is shewn that the witnesses to the miracles in proof of Christianity, had all the conditions and qualifications which can be required to render any testimony good and valid. Concerning the proneness of mankind in all ages to believe wonders, especially in matters of religion. This no reason for rejecting all miracles at once, without farther examination. The miracles wrought in proof of Christianity not done in an ignorant and barbarous age. His pretence that different miracles wrought in favour of different religions destroy one another, and shew that none of them are to be depended upon, examined. The absurdity of this way of reasoning shewn. Instances produced by him of miracles well attested, and which yet ought to be rejected as false and incredible. A particular examination of what he has offered concerning the miracles attributed to the Abbè de Paris, and which he pretends much surpasss those of our Saviour in credit and authority.

L E T T E R V.

*Lord Bolingbroke's posthumous works an insolent attempt on religion natural and revealed. Not written according to the laws of method. His fair professions, and the advantageous account he gives of his own design. He exalteth himself above all that have written before him, antients and moderns: blames the Free-thinkers for taking unbecoming liberties; yet writes himself without any regard to the rules of decency. His outrageous invectives against the holy Scriptures, particularly against the writings of Moses and St. Paul. The severe censures he passes on
the*

THE C O N T E N T S.

the most celebrated heathen philosophers. But above all, the virulent and contemptuous reproaches he casteth upon Christian philosophers and divines, ancient and modern. A general account of his scheme, and the main principles to which it is reducible.

L E T T E R VI.

Lord Bolingbroke asserts the existence of God against the atheists, but rejects the argument a priori, and that drawn from the general consent of mankind. He is for reducing all the divine attributes to wisdom and power, and blames the divines for distinguishing between the physical and moral attributes. He asserts that we cannot ascribe goodness and justice to God according to our ideas of them, nor argue with any certainty concerning them: and that it is absurd to deduce moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or to pretend to imitate him in those attributes. Reflections upon this scheme. It is shewn that the moral attributes are necessarily included in the idea of the absolutely perfect Being. The author's objections against ascribing those attributes to God, or distinguishing them from his physical attributes, particularly considered. His manifold inconsistencies and contradictions.

L E T T E R VII.

The doctrine of divine Providence nearly connected with that of the existence of God. Lord Bolingbroke's account of it, considered. He acknowledges a general but denies a particular providence, and asserts that providence relates only to collective bodies, but doth not extend to individuals. The true notion of providence stated. What we are to understand by a particular providence. The reasonableness of believing it, and the great importance of it shewn. The contrary

THE CONTENTS.

trary scheme absurd and inconsistent with itself, and of the worst consequence to mankind. The objections against a particular providence, examined. Concerning occasional interpositions. They are not properly miraculous, nor deviations from the general laws of providence, but applications of these laws to particular cases. To acknowledge such interpositions is not to suppose the world governed by miracles, nor to introduce an universal theocracy, like the Jewish. Angels may be employed in particular cases as ministers of divine providence.

LETTER VIII.

Favourable declarations of Lord Bolingbroke concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state. He represents it as having been believed from the earliest antiquity, and acknowledges the great usefulness of that doctrine. Yet it appears from many passages, that he himself was not for admitting it. He treats it as an Egyptian invention, taken up without reason, and as a vulgar error, which was rejected when men began to examine. He will not allow that the soul is a spiritual substance distinct from the body, and pretends that all the phenomena lead us to conclude that the soul dies with the body. Reflections upon this. The immateriality of the soul argued from its essential properties, which are entirely different from the properties of matter, and incompatible with them. The author's objections answered. Concerning the moral argument for a future state of retributions drawn from the unequal distributions of this present state. Lord Bolingbroke's charge against this way of arguing as blasphemous and injurious to divine providence, considered. His great inconsistency in setting up as an advocate for the goodness and justice of providence. That maxim whatever is best,

THE CONTENTS.

best, examined. If rightly understood it is not inconsistent with the belief of a future state.

LETTER IX.

Observations on Lord Bolingbroke's account of the law of nature. He asserts it to be so plain and obvious to the meanest understanding, that men cannot be mistaken in it. The contrary shewn from his own acknowledgment. He makes self-love the only original spring from which our moral duties and affections flow: yet supposes universal benevolence to be the fundamental law of our nature. He declares that we are obliged by the law of nature to place our hope and trust in God, and address ourselves to him. This shewn to be inconsistent with the principles he had advanced. He asserts polygamy to be founded in the law of nature. No such thing, according to him, as natural shame or modesty. The account he gives of the sanctions of the law of nature, considered. He allows no sanctions of that law with respect to individuals. The ill consequences of his scheme to the interests of morality and virtue, represented.

LETTER X.

An examination of what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered concerning revelation in general. He asserts that mankind had no need of an extraordinary revelation. The contrary fully shewn. A divine revelation very needful to instruct men in the most important principles of religion, especially those relating to the unity, the perfections, and providence of God; the worship that is to be rendered to him; moral duty taken in its just extent; the chief good and happiness of man; the terms of our acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when we have offended him;

THE CONTENTS.

him; and the rewards and punishments of a future state. It is reasonable to believe that there was a revelation communicated from the beginning. A notion and belief of this has very generally obtained. The wisest men of antiquity sensible, that bare reason alone not sufficient to enforce doctrine and laws with a due authority upon mankind. The most celebrated philosophers acknowledged the need they stood in of a divine revelation. The author's exceptions against this, considered. Under pretence of extolling the effects which a true divine revelation must have produced, he endeavours to prove, that no such revelation was ever really given. His scheme, contrary to his own intention, tends to shew the usefulness and necessity of divine revelation.

LETTER XI.

Lord Bolingbroke's strange representation of the Jewish revelation. His attempts against the truth of the Mosaic history. The antiquity, impartiality, and excellent tendency of that history shewn. The pretence that Moses was not a contemporary author, and that his history is not confirmed by collateral testimony, and that there is no proof that he writ the Pentateuch, examined. The Mosaic history and laws not forged in the time of the judges, nor in that of the kings, nor after the Babylonish captivity. The charge of inconsistencies in the Mosaic accounts, considered. The grand objection against the Mosaic history drawn from the incredible nature of the facts there related, examined at large. The reason and propriety of erecting the Mosaic polity. No absurdity in supposing God to have selected the Jews as a peculiar people. The great and amazing difference between them and the heathen nations, as to the acknowledgment and worship of the one true God, and of him only.

THE CONTENTS.

only. The good effects of the Jewish constitution, and the valuable ends that were answered by it. It is no just objection against the truth of the Scripture accounts, that they come to us through the hands of the Jews.

LETTER XII.

The excellent nature and tendency of the Scriptures of the old Testament. Lord Bolingbroke treats it as blasphemy to say that they were divinely inspired. A summary of his objections against their divine original and authority. His charge against the Scriptures, as giving mean and unworthy ideas of God, considered at large. The representations he himself gives of God and of his providence shewn to be unworthy, and of the worst consequence. Concerning God's being represented in Scripture as entering into covenant with man. The pretence of his being described as a tutelary God to Abraham, and to the people of Israel, and of his being degraded to the meanest offices and employments, distinctly examined. The passages in which bodily parts seem to be ascribed to God, not designed to be taken in a literal sense. The Scripture itself sufficiently guards against a wrong interpretation of those passages. In what sense human passions and affections are attributed to the supreme Being. A remarkable passage of Mr. Collins to this purpose.

LETTER XIII.

Farther objections against the Mosaic writings, and the Scriptures of the old testament, considered. The laws of Moses not contradictory to the law of nature. This particularly shewn with regard to the command for exterminating the Canaanites, and the law for punishing those among the Israelites that should revolt
to

THE CONTENTS.

to idolatry, with death. The law of Moses not accountable for the fury of the zealots. The instances of Phineas and Mattathias considered. Insociability not the first principle of the law of Moses, nor did that law take the Jews out of all moral obligations to the rest of mankind. There is nothing false or absurd in the Mosaic account of the creation of the world, and the fall of man. Concerning the sanctions of the law of Moses. The not making express mention of future rewards and punishments in that law, no argument against its divine original. Some other objections against the Scriptures obviated.

LETTER XIV.

The favourable representation made by Lord Bolingbroke of the excellent nature and design of the original Christian revelation. He gives up several of the deistical objections against it, and even seems to acknowledge its divine original: yet endeavours to expose its doctrines, and invalidate its proofs and evidences. The law of nature and Christianity not to be opposed to one another. The Gospel not a republication of the doctrine of Plato. The pretended opposition between the Gospel of Christ and that of St. Paul, considered. This apostle vindicated against the censures and reproaches cast upon him. The miracles of Christianity, if really wrought, owned by Lord Bolingbroke, to be sufficient proofs of its divine authority. The Gospels, by his own acknowledgment, give a just account of the discourses and actions of Jesus: yet he has attempted to destroy their credit. His pretence that it would be necessary to have the originals in our hands, or attested copies of those originals, examined. The several ways he takes to account for the propagation of Christianity shewn to be insufficient. What he offers concerning the little effect

THE CONTENTS.

effect the Christian religion has had in the reformation of mankind, considered. Its being founded in faith, not inconsistent with its being founded on rational evidence.

LETTER XV.

Objections against the laws and doctrines of Christianity, considered. The precepts of Scripture not delivered in a formal code or system, but in a way that is really more useful, and comprehend all the duties of morality. Concerning our Saviour's precepts in the sermon on the mount. The Gospel law, with respect to polygamy and divorces, not contrary to reason and nature, but wise and excellent. The Christian doctrine of a mediator, and of our redemption by the blood of Christ, vindicated. It gives worthy ideas of God, and shews the divine perfections in their harmony. It is full of comfort to good men, but gives no encouragement to the wicked and presumptuous. Not contrary to reason, though it could not have been discovered by it. That doctrine not owing to the pride of the human heart. Traces of the doctrine of the Trinity to be found, according to Lord Bolingbroke, in all the antient theistical philosophers.

LETTER XVI.

The Christian doctrine of future retributions vindicated. It does not charge God with injustice in this present state. Future punishments not contrary to reason, or the divine attributes. The pretence that they can be of no use either for reparation or terror, examined. The rewards and punishments of a future state shall be proportioned to the different degrees of virtue and vice. The propriety of appointing a state of trial to reasonable beings. It is wisely ordered, that the sentence at the day of judgment shall be final and irre-

THE CONTENTS.

irreversible. *The Christian representation of that judgment, and its consequences, solemn and affecting, and of excellent use. Lord Bolingbroke's injurious charge against the primitive Christians. His complaints of the corruptions brought into the Christian church. Such writers very improper to set up for reformers. True genuine Christianity needs not fear the assaults of its ablest adversaries.*

The CONCLUSION, in an address to Deists and professed Christians.

ERRATA.

Page. 12, line 9, for injurious, read ingenious.—P. 229, l. 2, for as, read no.—P. 321, l. 4, for quiqui, read quique; l. 7. for cura, read curæ.—P. 331, l. last, for worthy, read strictly.—P. 356, l. 17, for policy, read polity.—P. 497, l. 2, for It is, read His; l. 5, for withed, read looked.—P. 646, l. 7. for from, read force.



A VIEW of the

DEISTICAL WRITERS, &c.

In several LETTERS to a FRIEND.

LETTER I.

Mr. Hume, a subtil and ingenious writer, but extremely sceptical, and fond of novelty. He proposes to free Metaphysics from that jargon and obscurity, which has served only as a shelter to superstition and error. His doctrine concerning the relation of Cause and Effect examined. He declares, that the knowlege of this relation is of the highest importance and necessity; and that all our reasonings concerning matter of fact and experience, and concerning the existence of any Being, are founded upon it: Yet he sets himself to shew, that there is no real connection between Cause and Effect; and that there can be no certain, nor even probable reasoning, from the one to the other. Reflections upon the absurdity, and pernicious tendency, of this scheme. The inconsistencies this writer hath fallen into.

S I R,




OO N after the publication of the *View of the Deistical Writers*, you acquainted me, that some judicious persons expressed their surprise, that no notice had been taken of Mr. *Hume*, who had

VOL. II.

B

openly

LETTER I. openly attacked Christianity, especially in his late
Essay on Miracles; and that in a manner which
had something new in it, and different from
what others had written before him. The true
 reason was, that I had not at that time read that
 Essay. The only piece which I had then read
 of that Gentleman's, was his *Moral and Political*
Essays; in which there was nothing that
 directly related to the Christian cause. But I have
 since perused some other of his writings, par-
 ticularly what he calls *Philosophical Essays con-*
cerning human Understanding: The second
 edition of which, with additions and correct-
 ions, which is what I have now by me, was
 published at *London* in 1750. This Gentleman
 must be acknowledged to be a subtil writer, of
a very metaphysical genius, and has a neat and
agreeable manner of expression. But it is ob-
 vious to every judicious reader, that he hath,
 in many instances, carried scepticism to an un-
 reasonable height; and seemeth every-where
 to affect an air of making new observations and
 discoveries. His writings seem, for the most
 part, to be calculated rather to amuse, or even
 confound, than to instruct and enlighten the
 understanding: And there are not a few things
 in them, that strike at the foundation of natural,
 as well as the proofs and evidences of revealed
 religion. This appears to me to be, in a parti-
 cular manner, the character of his *Philosophical*
Essays. And you will, perhaps, be of the same
 opinion,

opinion, when you have considered the remarks LETTER I.
I now send you. 

If we were to form a judgment of these Essays, from the account he himself is pleased to give of them, and of his intention in writing them, our notion of them would be highly to their advantage. Having taken notice of the abstractedness of metaphysical speculations, he says, that he has, “in the following Essays, endeavoured to throw some light upon subjects, from which, uncertainty has hitherto deterred the wise, and obscurity the ignorant.” He proposes “to unite the boundaries of the different Species of Philosophy, by reconciling profound enquiry with clearness, and truth with novelty”; and thinks “it will be happy, if, reasoning in this easy manner, he can undermine the foundations of an abstruse philosophy, which seems to have serv’d hitherto only as a shelter to superstition, and a cover to absurdity and error*.” He undertakes to “banish all that jargon, which has so long taken possession of metaphysical reasonings, and drawn such disgrace upon them†.” And after having represented *all the received systems of Philosophy, and all common Theories, as extremely defective*, he promises to “avoid all jargon and confusion, in treating of such subtil and profound subjects‡.”

* Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 18, 19. † *Id.* p. 27, 28.

‡ *Id.* p. 97. 106, 107.

LETTER

I.

That part of these Essays, which I shall first take notice of, and which is indeed of a very uncommon strain, and seems to lie at the foundation of many of those extraordinary things which he afterwards advances, is what he proposes to consider, p. 47, & *seq.*; where he observes, that “it is a subject worthy curiosity, “to enquire what is the nature of that evidence, which assures us of any real existence “and matter of fact, beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our “memory.” He observes, that “this part of “philosophy has been little cultivated either by “the antients or moderns.” But tho’ it is difficult, it may be “useful, by destroying that “implicit faith and credulity, which is the bane “of all reasoning and free enquiry *.” After such a pompous profession, one would be apt to expect something extremely deserving of our attention. Let us therefore examine into his scheme, that we may know what it really is; and then our way will be clear to make the necessary remarks upon it.

use & effect.

He observes, that “the relation of cause and effect is necessary to the subsistence of our “species, and the regulation of our conduct “in every circumstance and occurrence of human life. Without this, we should never “have been able to adjust means to ends, nor “employ our rational powers either to the “producing of good, or avoiding of evil †.”

* Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 47, 48, 49. † *Ib.* p. 89, 90.

And,

And, accordingly, he expressly declares, that LETTE
 “ if there be any relation, any object, which I.
 “ it imports us to know perfectly, it is that of
 “ cause and effect. On this we found all our
 “ reasonings, concerning matter of fact and ex-
 “ perience : And by this alone we retain any
 “ assurance concerning objects that are removed
 “ from the present testimony of our memory
 “ and senses ;” and that “ the existence of any
 “ Being can only be known by arguments from
 “ its cause, or its effect *.” It appeareth then,
 that by his own acknowledgement, it is of the
 highest importance to know the relation of
 cause and effect. Let us now see what instruct-
 ion he gives us with regard to that relation.

He absolutely denies, that this relation can
 possibly be known *a priori* ; and asserts, that
 it entirely arises from experience † : That it is
 this only that “ teaches us the nature and bounds
 “ of cause and effect, and enables us to infer
 “ the existence of one object from that of ano-
 “ ther ‡.” But he takes a great deal of pains to
 shew, that experience cannot furnish a reason-
 able foundation for such an inference. He had
 laid it down as a principle, that all arguments
from experience can at best only be probable.
 But he will not allow even this, in the present
 case : He sets himself to prove, that “ not so
 “ much as any probable arguments can be
 “ drawn from cause to effect, or from effect

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 123. 258. † *Ib.* p. 50.
 52, 53. ‡ *Ib.* p. 258.

LETTER " to cause *:" That " the conjunction of the
 I. " effect with the cause is entirely arbitrary, not
 " only in its first conception, *a priori*, but
 " after it is suggested by experience †:" That,
 " indeed, in fact, we infer the one from the
 " other; but that this is not by a chain of rea-
 " soning; nor is there any medium which may
 " enable the mind to draw such an inference ‡.
 " The only ground of such an inference, is the
 " supposed resemblance between the past and
 " and the future; but that it is impossible
 " any argument, from experience, should prove
 " that resemblance: And yet if there be not
 " such a resemblance, all experience becomes
 " useless, and can give rise to no inference or
 " conclusion §." He positively asserts, that
 " we know only by experience the frequent
 " conjunction of objects, without being ever
 " able to comprehend any thing like con-
 " nection between them. ||" And he frequently
 observes, that the connection is only in our
own thoughts or conceptions, not in the things
themselves; and resolves the conjunction be-
 tween cause and effect, and the inference
 drawn from the one to the other, wholly into
 custom; that it is a " customary connection
 " in the thought or imagination betwixt one
 " object, and its usual attendant §§;" that
 custom, he sometimes calls *a Habit* |||; and re-

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 62, 63. † *Ib.* p. 53, 54.
 ‡ *Ib.* p. 60, 61. § *Ib.* p. 65, 66. || *Ib.* p. 114. §§ *Ibid.*
 p. 123. ||| *Ib.* p. 73, 74. 9: 120.

presents it as owing to a repetition of acts; at LETTER other times, he ascribes it to an *instinct*, or *mechanical tendency*, and represents it as a necessary *act of the mind*, and *infallible in its operations**: Yet afterwards, speaking of the same custom or instinct, he says, that, like *other instincts*, it may be *fallacious and deceitful*†.

The great argument he produces, and upon which he lays the greatest stress, to shew that we can have no certainty in our conclusions concerning the relation of cause and effect, nor reason from one to the other, is, that we have no idea of that connection which unites the effect to the cause, or of the force, power, or energy, in the cause, which produces the effect; nor, consequently, any medium whereby we can infer the one from the other. He sets himself particularly to shew, that neither external objects give us the idea of power, nor reflections on the operations of our own minds‡.

If what our author offers on this head, had been only to display the subtilty of his metaphysical genius, and shew how little we are able distinctly to explain the manner even of those things of which we have the greatest certainty, we should have allowed him to amuse himself, and his readers, with a little philosophical play. But what he here advances, concerning cause and effect, power and connection, he makes

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 73. 91. † *Ib.* p. 251.
‡ *Ib.* p. 105, 106.

LETTER the foundation of conclusions relating to mat-
 I. ters of great importance,

———— *Hæ nugæ seria ducunt*
In mala ———

By endeavouring to destroy all reasoning, from causes to effects, or from effects to causes; and not allowing, that we can so much as probably infer the one from the other, by arguing either *a priori*, or from experience, he subverts, as far as in him lies, the very foundation of those reasonings, that are drawn from the effects which we behold in the frame of the universe, to the existence of one supreme, intelligent, all-powerful cause; and accordingly we shall find, that he himself afterwards applies this principle to this very purpose. Another use that he makes of this doctrine concerning cause and effect, is what we would not have expected from it, to confound all difference between physical and moral causes; that the latter have the same kind of causality with the former. This is the purport of his eighth Essay, which is concerning *Liberty and Necessity* *. Though if he argued consistently, he must deny that there is any such thing in nature as *Necessity*, or *Necessary Connection*; or that there is either physical or moral cause at all.

three misivical self introduction You will scarce expect, that I should enter upon laborious confutation of so whimsical a scheme, though proposed to the world with great pomp,

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 129, *et seq.*

and

and represented by the author himself as of *vast* ^{LETTER} *importance*. I shall content myself with making ^{I.} some general observations upon it.

And first, whereas this writer frequently, ^{1) No experience} throughout these Essays, lays a mighty stress ^{sound.} upon experience, as the great guide of human ^{x 13.} life, and the only foundation of all our knowledge, especially with respect to matter of fact, and the existence of objects: He here plainly endeavours to shew, that there can be no arguing from experience at all; nor can any reasonable conclusion be drawn from it: For he will not allow, that any argument can be drawn, or inference made, from experience, but what is founded on the supposed relation or connection betwixt cause and effect. If therefore there be no relation or connection betwixt cause and effect at all, in the nature of things, which it is the whole design of his reasoning on this subject to shew, then all certainty of experience, all proof from it, entirely fail; all experiences, as he himself expresses it, *becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion* *.

Secondly. Another remark I would make ^{2) No logic} upon Mr. *Hume's* way of arguing, is, that it ^{certain} proceeds upon a wrong foundation, and which is contrary to truth and reason; *viz.* that we cannot have any reasonable certainty of the truth of a thing, or that it really is, when we cannot distinctly explain the manner of it, or how it is. The sum of his argumentation, as I have already

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 66.

LETTER I. hinted, with relation to cause and effect, is, that we cannot be certain of any such thing, as power or energy, because we cannot conceive or explain precisely wherein it consists, or how it operates. But this is a very fallacious way of reasoning: Though we cannot metaphysically explain the manner in which the cause operateth upon the effect, yet we may, in many cases, be sure that there is a connection between them; and that, where there are certain effects produced, there are powers correspondent or adequate to the production of those effects. The mind, in such cases, when it sees an effect produced, is led, by a quick and undoubted process of reasoning, to acknowledge that there must be a cause which hath a power of producing it; or else we must say, that it is produced without any cause at all, or that nothing in nature hath any power of producing it; which is the greatest of all absurdities. He urgeth, that “it must be allowed, that when we know “a power, we know that very circumstance “in the cause, by which it is enabled to produce the effect.” And then he asks, “Do “we pretend to be acquainted with the nature “of the human soul, and the nature of an idea, “or the aptitude of the one to produce the “other*?” But certainly we may know, that there is something in the cause which produceth the effect, though we cannot distinctly explain what that circumstance in the cause is, by

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 110, 111.

which

which it is enabled to produce it. We must ^{LETTER}
 not deny, that there is in the mind a power of ^{I.}
raising up ideas, and recalling them, and fixing
the attention upon them, because we cannot
explain how this is done. The argument Mr.
Hume offers to prove, that we can have no as-
 surance of the reality of force or power; *viz.*
 because we cannot distinctly conceive or explain
 how it operateth, would equally prove that we
 cannot be sure that we have any ideas at all, be-
 cause we cannot well explain the nature of an
 idea, or how it is formed in the mind. He
 himself, on another occasion, observes against ^x
Malebranche, and the modern *Cartesians*, who ^{MB}
 deny all power and activity in second causes,
 and ascribe all to God; that "we are indeed
 " ignorant of the manner in which bodies ope-
 " rate upon one another; and so we are of the
 " manner or force by which a mind, even the
 " Supreme mind, operates, either on itself or
 " on Body. Were our ignorance therefore
 " a sufficient reason for rejecting any thing, we
 " should be led into that principle of refusing
 " all energy to the Supreme Being, as much as
 " to the grossest matter *." He here seems to
 censure it as a wrong way of arguing, to deny
 that a thing is, because we cannot distinctly
 conceive the manner how it is; or to make our
 ignorance of any thing a sufficient reason for
 rejecting it: And yet it is manifest, that his
 own reasoning against power or causality, force

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 117, 118.

LETTER I. or energy, depends upon this principle; and indeed, by comparing the several parts of his scheme, there is too much reason to apprehend, that he had it in view to deny all force and energy, and all power whatsoever, in the Supreme, as well as in secondary causes; or at least to represent it as very uncertain. I think this Gentleman would have done better, to have said, as a late ^{serious} infuriose author of his own country, "We have no adequate idea of power; " we see evidently that there must be such a " thing in nature; but we cannot conceive " how it acts, nor what connects the producing cause with the produced effect." Chevalier *Ramsay's* principles of natural and revealed religion, Vol. I. p. 109.

Natural laws not uniform. Thirdly, A third remark is, that many of our author's arguings, on this subject, are contrary to the most evident dictates of common sense. Such is that, where he asserts, that not so much as a probable argument can be drawn, in any case, from experience, concerning the connection betwixt cause and effect; or from whence we may conclude, that from a similar cause we may expect similar effects*. Thus, e. g. according to his way of reasoning, it cannot so much as probably be concluded from experience, that if a quantity of dry gun-powder be laid in any place, and fire be applied to it, it will cause an explosion; or that if it hath such an effect to day, a like quantity of powder, the

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 61, 62, 63.

same way circumstanced, will produce the same effect to-morrow. No probable reason can be brought to shew, that that which has had the effect in thousands of instances in time past, will, though all circumstances appear perfectly similar, have the same effect in time future. He grants, indeed, that, in such cases, the mind is determined to draw the inference; yet he asserts, that the understanding has no part in the operation. But surely, when, from observation and experience, we come to know and judge of the ordinary course of nature, the understanding may justly draw a probable argument or conclusion, that from such and such causes, so circumstanced, such effects will follow. This inference is perfectly rational. And it is a strange way of talking, that, even from a number of uniform experiments, we cannot so much as probably infer a connection between the cause and the effect, the sensible qualities and the secret powers: The reason he gives, is, that "if there be any suspicion, that the course of nature may change; and that the past may be no rule for the future; experience can give rise to no inference or conclusion*." But is the probability of a thing destroyed, according to any way of reasoning allowed hitherto, because it is barely possible it may happen otherwise, though there is ten thousand to one against it? Mr. *Hume*, elsewhere, when arguing against miracles, lays it down as a principle,

* *Hume's Philosophical Essays*, p. 65, 66.

LETTER that there is a constant uniformity in the course
 I. of nature, never to be violated; but here, in
 order to shew, that no probable reason can be
 brought from experience, concerning the con-
 nection of cause and effect, he supposes, that
 there may be a suspicion that the course of na-
 ture may change. Thus this Gentleman knows
how to assume and alter principles, as best suits
his own present convenience. Reason leadeth
 us to conclude, that the course of nature is the
 appointment and constitution of that most wise
 and powerful Being, who made the world, and
 settled that law and order which he judged fit-
 test and properest; and then reason leadeth us
 also to conclude, that, except in very extraor-
 dinary cases, the same order will continue;
 and extraordinary cases do not hinder the pro-
 bability of the ordinary course. So that reason
 affords a proper medium for a probable con-
 clusion concerning what effects are to be ex-
 pected. He affirms, indeed, that all inferences
 of this kind are only the effects of custom or
 habit, not of reasoning*. But why is custom
 or habit here mentioned in opposition to reason,
 or as exclusive of it? May they not both con-
 cur? It is evident, that they often go together,
 and mutually strengthen one another. Custom
 alone, without reason, is often not to be de-
 pended on: But in this case, reason gives its
 suffrage; and, in all arguings in experimental
 philosophy, reason argues from similar causes

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 73, 74, *et passim*.


to similar effects. It is by reason we draw those LETTER inferences, and the inferences are rational. It ^{I.} must not be said, that in this case there is no reasoning at all; but that the reasoning is often so obvious, that it carries conviction by the very constitution of the human mind, which naturally acquiesceth in it as satisfactory. It seems evident, that the Great Author of our beings hath formed our minds, so as to reason in this manner; and he would not have done this, if it had not been both of great use in human life to make such inferences, and if there were not a real foundation for it in the nature of things. This writer himself owns, that “none but a
 “fool or a madman will ever pretend to dispute
 “the authority of experience, or to reject that
 “great guide of human life: But he thinks
 “it may be allowed a philosopher to have so
 “much curiosity as to examine the principle
 “of human nature, which gives this weighty
 “authority to experience*.” But I cannot help thinking, that if we were to judge of philosophy, by the specimen this Gentleman hath given of it in this instance, many would be apt to conclude, that there is a great difference, and even opposition, between philosophy and common sense; that what is so obvious and apparent to the common sense and reason of mankind, that he is a fool and a madman, who doubts of it; yet in philosophy is not so much as probable.

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 63. 66.

LETTER I. Another instance, in which our author's scheme is not very reconcilable to the common sentiments of mankind, is, that he says, that "though we learn, by experience, the frequent *conjunction* of objects, yet we are unable to comprehend any thing like *connection* between them; and that there appears not in all nature any thing like *connection*, conceivable by us; all events are entirely loose and separate; one event follows another; but we never observe any tie betwixt them; they seem conjoined, but never connected*." But it is evident, that in many cases we have a distinct idea of conjunction or contiguity, as in a heap of sand; and of connection, as betwixt cause and effect; and the connection in this case is not merely in our thoughts, as this gentleman is pleased to represent it; but this very connection in our thoughts is founded on a connection which we perceive in the things themselves. They are not connected as cause and effect, because we think them so; but we perceive them to be connected, because we find they are so: Nor is this owing merely to a custom or habit in our minds, but there is in nature a real foundation for it.

Fourthly, Another remark which occurs to me, upon considering Mr. *Hume's* scheme, is, that he hath fallen into several inconsistencies and contradictions: And, indeed, it is not to

* *Hume's Philosophical Essays*, p. 120.

be wondered at, that a man who argueth against LETTER
I.
common sense, however subtil and ingenious 
he may otherwise be, should also be inconsistent
with himself. I have already taken notice of
the passages in which he representeth experi-
ence as uncertain, and that not so much as a
probable argument can be drawn from it; and
yet in his sixth essay, which is concerning *pro-
bability*, he shews that experience may not only
furnish probable conclusions, but what he calls
proofs; which he explains to be *such* arguments
from experience, as leave no room for doubt or
opposition*. And he frequently speaks of ex-
perience in very high terms, as a certain guide.
Again, in several passages above referred to, he
expressly declares, that in making experimental
conclusions, there is no place for *reasoning*;
that the inference in this case is entirely owing
to custom, and the understanding has no part
in it. And yet he elsewhere owns, that “there
“ is great scope of *reasoning* in inferences of
“ this kind from observation and experience;”
and that not only men greatly surpass the infe-
rior animals in this way of reasoning, but that
one man very much excels another†: And he
declares, that “all our *reasonings* are founded
“ on a species’ of analogy; where the causes
“ are entirely similar, the analogy is perfect;
“ and the inference drawn from it is regarded
“ as certain and conclusive‡;” though he had

* Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 93. † *Ib.* p. 170, 171.

‡ *Ib.* p. 165.

LETTER I. said, that “it is impossible that any arguments from experience can prove such a resemblance”*. Another inconsistency, which may be observed in Mr. *Hume*’s reasoning on this subject is, that though he represents the connection betwixt cause and effect to be only a connection in our thoughts, not in the things themselves†; yet he asserts, that “there is a kind of pre-established harmony between the course of nature, and the succession of our ideas; and though the powers and forces, by which the former is governed, be wholly unknown to us, yet our thoughts and conceptions have still, we find, gone on in the same train with other works of nature‡.” Where he seems to suppose that there is a real connection in the nature of things, to which the connection in our own minds correspondeth. The general strain of his arguing in several of his essays, seems to be designed to prove, if it proves any thing, that we cannot be sure there is any such thing as cause or causal connection in the universe: Yet he says, “it is universally allowed that nothing exists without a cause of its existence; and that chance is a negative word, and means not any real power which has any where a being in nature§.” Here he falls into the common way of speaking, that every thing which existeth must have a cause of its existence; otherwise we must acknowledge the

* *Hume*’s Philosophical Essays, p. 66. † *Ib.* p. 123, 126.
‡ *Ib.* p. 90. § *Ib.* p. 151.

operation of chance. And he observes, that ^{LETTER} "there is no such thing as chance in the ^{I.} world*." Causes therefore must be acknowledged, though we cannot explain the manner of their causality: And he himself, in reckoning up the principles of the connection of our ideas, distinctly mentions *resemblance*, *contiguity*, and *causation*; and this last he makes to be the most common and useful of all†. And yet, in the course of his reasoning, he really leaves no place for *causation*, distinct from *similarity* or *resemblance*, and *contiguity*. It may be mentioned, as another instance of his inconsistency, that he frequently makes power, and necessary connection, the same thing; and argues, that if there be any connection betwixt cause and effect at all, it must be a necessary one; for that cannot be called a cause, that is not necessarily connected with the effect‡. And yet, in his Essay on *Liberty* and *Necessity*, when speaking of the influence of motives upon the mind, he saith, that "as this influence " is *usually* conjoined with the action, it must " be esteemed a cause, and be looked upon as " an instance of the necessity which we would " establish§:" Where he plainly supposeth, that it is not essential to the notion of a cause, that it is infallibly and always connected with the effect; but that it is sufficient, if it be usually joined with it. And to the same purpose, he

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 93. † *Ib.* p. 32, 84.

‡ *Ib.* p. 93, 103, 151. § *Ib.* p. 154.

LETTER faith, that "all causes are not conjoined to
 I. "their usual effects, with like constancy and
 "uniformity*." Indeed, his whole Essay on
 Liberty and Necessity, though seemingly built
 upon the scheme he had advanced in his fore-
 going Essays, with relation to cause and effect,
 is really not reconcilable to it. In all his rea-
 sonings in those Essays, concerning cause and
 effect, he had argued that there is no such thing
 as *necessary connection*, or indeed any con-
 nection at all, betwixt cause and effect: And
 upon this scheme, it is idle to talk of a necessity
 either in physical or moral causes: And yet in
 his Essay on Liberty and Necessity, he plainly
 argues upon the supposition of a real connection;
 though he will only call it a conjunction betwixt
 cause and effect: And he all along supposeth the
 influence of causes, and the power of motives;
 and that a necessity must be acknowledged in
 moral as well as physical causes. He would
 have us begin the question concerning Liberty
 and Necessity, not "by examining the facul-
 "ties of the soul, but by examining the ope-
 "rations of body, and of brute unintelligent
 "matter†:" And with regard to this, he ob-
 serves, that "it is universally allowed, that
 "matter, in all its operations, is actuated by
 "a necessary force; and that every effect is
 "so precisely determined by the nature and
 "energy of its cause, that no other effect, in
 "such particular circumstances, could possibly

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 138. † *Ib.* p. 147.

"have

“ have resulted from the operation of its ^{LETTER} cause*^{I.}”. And he expressly asserteth, that
 “ the conjunction betwixt motives and voluntary actions, is as regular and uniform as that
 “ betwixt the cause and effect, in any part of
 “ nature†.” Thus we see, that he can acknowledge cause and effect, and the connection betwixt them, when he has a mind to take advantage of this, for overthrowing the liberty of human actions. And he concludes that Essay, with taking notice of the objection which might be raised against what he had advanced; *viz.* that “ if voluntary actions be subjected to
 “ the same laws of necessity with the operations of matter, there is a continued chain
 “ of necessary Causes, pre-ordained and pre-terminated, reaching from the original cause of
 “ all, to every single volition of every human
 “ creature. While we act, we are, at the same
 “ time, acted upon. There is no contingency
 “ any-where in the universe, no indifferency,
 “ no liberty.” This objection he putteth very strongly‡; and yet I cannot see that, according to the hypothesis he had advanced in the foregoing Essays, there can be any just foundation for it: For if there be only a mere conjunction of events, but no causal influence, it cannot be said, that whilst we act we are acted upon. On the contrary, nothing is acted upon, nor is there any power, force, or energy in

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 131, 132. † *Ib.* p. 141.

‡ *Ib.* p. 157, 158.

LETTER nature. All events are loose, separate, and
 I. unconnected, and only follow one another,
 without connection; and therefore there can
 be no continued chain of necessary causes at
 all. This would be the proper answer, according
 to the principles he had laid down, if he
 had thought those principles would bear. But
 he hath not thought fit to make use of it; but,
 in contradiction to his own scheme, seems here
 to admit a chain of necessary causes, physical
 and moral, in order to load providence; and
 plainly represents the objection as unanswerable*.

Thus I have considered, pretty largely, our
 author's extraordinary scheme; and the observations
 that have been made, may help us to judge of
 this gentleman's character as a writer, whether it
 deserveth all the admiration and applause, which
 he himself, as well as others, have been willing to
 bestow upon it. We may see, by what hath been
 observed, how far he hath answered what he had
 prepared the reader to expect, *clearness* and *precision*,
 in his way of treating these *curious and sublime subjects*.
 He had particularly proposed, with regard to power,
 force, energy, "to fix, if possible, the precise
 " meaning of those terms; and thereby re-
 " move part of that obscurity, which is so
 " much complained of in this species of phi-
 " losophy †."

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 162. † *Ib.* p. 101, 102.

What Mr. *Hume* hath offered, concerning LETTER
I.
cause and effect, puts me in mind of a remarkable passage in Lord *Bolingbroke's* posthumous works, which I shall mention on this occasion.

“ Whatever knowlege (saith his Lordship)
“ we acquire of apparent causes, we can acquire none of real causality, or that power, that virtue, whatever it be, by which one being acts on another, and becomes a cause.
“ We may call this by different names, according to the different effects of it; but to know it in its first principles, to know the nature of it, would be to know as God himself knows; and therefore this will be always unknown to us, in causes that seem to be most under our inspection, as well as in others that are the most remote from it.”

And he represents those “ philosophers as ridiculous, who, when they have discovered a real actual cause, in its effects, by the phænomena, reject it because they cannot conceive its causality, nor assign a sufficient reason why and how it is*.” This may seem to bear hard upon Mr. *Hume*: But what is more to be wondered at, he hath in effect passed a censure upon himself. He indeed gives a high encomium on sceptical philosophy, in the beginning of his sixth Essay; that “ every passion is mortified by it, but the love of truth; and that passion never is, nor can be carried to too high a degree. It is surprising

* Lord Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 541.

LETTER I. “therefore, that this philosophy, which, in
 “almost every instance, must be harmless and
 “innocent, should be the subject of so much
 “groundless reproach and obloquy*.” But
 afterwards, in his twelfth Essay, which is of
 the academical, or sceptical philosophy, he gives
 no advantageous notion of scepticism. He says,
 that “the grand scope of all the enquiries and
 “disputes of the sceptics, is to destroy reason
 “by ratiocination and argument †.” And speak-
 ing of the sceptical objections against the re-
 lation of cause and effect, he saith, that “while
 “the Sceptic insists upon these topics, he seems,
 “for the time at least, to destroy all assurance
 “and conviction :” And then he adds, that
 these arguments “might be displayed at a
 “greater length, if any durable good or be-
 “nefit to society could ever be expected to
 “result from them. For (saith he) here is the
 “chief, and most confounding objection, to
 “excessive scepticism, that no durable good
 “can ever be expected from it, while it remains
 “in its full force and vigour ‡.” And he had
 said, that “nature will always maintain her
 “rights, and prevaieth in the end, over any
 “abstract reasoning whatsoever §.”

But it were well, if the worst thing that could
 be said of our author’s excessive scepticism,
 were, that it is trifling and useless. It will soon

* Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 70. † *Ib.* p. 245. ‡ *Ib.* p. 251.
 § *Ib.* p. 71.

Mr. H U M E.

25

appear, that as he hath managed it, it is of a pernicious tendency. But you will probably be of opinion, that enough hath been said of this gentleman, and his oddities, for the present.

LETTER
I.

I am, &c.



LETTER

LETTER
II.


LETTER II.

Observations on Mr. Hume's essay concerning a particular providence and a future state. His attempt to shew that we cannot justly argue from the course of nature to a particular intelligent cause, because the subject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience, and because God is a singular cause, and the universe a singular effect, and therefore we cannot argue by a comparison with any other cause, or any other effect. His argument examined, whereby he pretends to prove, that since we know God only by the effects in the works of nature, we can judge of his proceedings no farther than we now see of them, and therefore cannot infer any rewards or punishments beyond what is already known by experience and observation. The usefulness of believing future retributions acknowledged by Mr. Hume, and that the contrary doctrine is inconsistent with good policy.

S I R,

IT appears from what was observed in my former letter, that few writers have carried scepticism in philosophy to a greater height than

than Mr. Hume. I now proceed to consider those things in his writings that seem to be more directly and immediately designed against religion. Some part of what he calls his PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS *concerning Human Understanding*, manifestly tends to subvert the very foundations of natural religion, or its most important principles. Another part of them is particularly level'd against the proofs and evidences of the christian revelation.

LETTER
II.


The former is what I shall first consider, and shall therefore examine the eleventh of those essays, the title of which is, *concerning a particular providence and a future state*. Mr. Hume introduces what he offers in this essay as sceptical paradoxes advanced by a friend, and pretends by no means to approve of them. He proposes some objections as from himself, to his friend's way of arguing; but takes care to do it in such a manner, as to give his friend a superiority in the argument. And some of the worst parts of this essay are directly proposed in his own person. The essay may be considered as consisting of two parts. The one seems to be designed against the existence of God, or of one supreme intelligent cause of the universe: The other, which appears to be the main intention of the essay, is particularly level'd against the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments.

LETTER

II.

I shall begin with the former, because it comes first in order to be considered, though it is not particularly mentioned till towards the conclusion of the essay. He observes in the person of his Epicurean friend, that “ while we argue from the course of nature, “ and infer a particular intelligent cause, which “ at first bestowed, and still preserves order “ in the universe, we embrace a principle “ which is both uncertain and useless. The “ reason he gives why it is uncertain is, be- “ cause the subject lies entirely beyond the “ reach of human experience*.” This is a specimen of the use our author would make of the principles he had laid down in the preceding essays. He had represented Experience as the only foundation of our knowledge with respect to matters of fact, and the existence of objects: that it is by experience alone that we know the relation of cause and effect; and he had also asserted, that not so much as as a probable argument can be drawn from experience to lay a foundation for our reasoning from cause to effect, or from effect to cause. I shall not add any thing here to what was offered in my former letter to shew the absurdity, the confusion, and inconsistency of these principles. I shall only observe, that this very writer, who had represented all arguments drawn from experience, with relation to cause and effect, as absolutely uncertain,

* Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 224.

yet makes it an objection against the argu-^{LETTER}
ment from the course of nature to an intel-^{II.}
ligent cause, that *the subject lies entirely*
beyond the reach of human experience. What
is the meaning of this is not easy to apprehend.
It will be readily allowed, that we do not
know by experience the whole course of
nature; yet enough of it falls within the
reach even of human observation and expe-
rience, to lay a reasonable foundation for
inferring from it a supreme intelligent cause.
In that part of the universe which cometh
under our notice and observation, we may
behold such illustrious characters of wisdom,
power, and goodness, as determine us by the
most natural way of reasoning in the world,
to acknowledge a most wise, and powerful, and
benign author and cause of the universe. The
inference is not beyond the reach of our
faculties, but is one of the most obvious that
offereth to the human mind. But perhaps
what the author intends by observing that
this subject lies entirely beyond the reach of
human experience, is this, That notwithstand-
ing the admirable marks of wisdom and design
which we behold in the course of nature, and
order of things, we cannot argue from thence
to prove a wise and intelligent cause of the
universe, or that there was any wisdom em-
ployed in the formation of it, because neither
we, nor any of the human race, were present
at the making of it, or saw how it was made.

This

LETTER

II.



This must be owned to be a very extraordinary way of reasoning, and I believe you will easily excuse me if I do not attempt a confutation of it.

Mr. Hume, after having argued thus in the person of his Epicurean friend, comes in the conclusion of this essay to propose another argument as from himself. “ I much doubt, “ faith he, whether it be possible for a cause “ to be known only by its effect, or to be “ of so singular and particular a nature as to “ have no parallel, and no similarity with “ any other cause or object, that has ever “ fallen under our observation. ’Tis only “ when two species of objects are found to “ be constantly conjoin’d, that we can infer “ the one from the other. And were an “ effect presented which was entirely singular, “ and could not be comprehended under any “ known species, I do not see that we could “ form any conjecture or inference at all concerning its cause. If experience, and observation, and analogy be, indeed, the only “ guides we can reasonably follow in inferences of this nature: Both the effect and “ cause must bear a similarity and resemblance “ to other effects and causes which we know, “ and which we have found in many instances “ to be conjoin’d with each other*.” Mr. *Hume* leaves it to his friend’s reflections to *prosecute the consequences of this Principle,*

* *Hume’s Philosophical Essays*, p. 232, 233.

which

which he had hinted before, might lead LETTER II.
into Reasonings of too nice and delicate a nature to be insisted on. The argument, as he hath managed it, is indeed sufficiently obscure and perplexed. But the general intention of it seems to be this, that all our arguings from cause to effect, or from effect to cause proceed upon analogy, or the comparing similar causes with similar effects. Where therefore there is supposed to be a singular cause to which there is no parallel (though he much doubts whether there can be a cause of so singular a nature) and a singular effect, there can be no arguing from the one to the other: Because in that case we cannot argue by a comparison with any other cause, or any other effect. Except therefore we can find another world to compare this with, and an intelligent cause of that world, we cannot argue from the effects in this present world to an intelligent cause: *i.e.* We cannot be sure there is one God, except we can prove there is one other God at least; or that this world was formed and produced by a wise intelligent cause, unless we know of another world like this, which was also formed by a wise intelligent cause, and perhaps, not then neither: For he seems to insist upon it, that there should be *many instances* of such causes and effects being *conjoined with each other*, in order to lay a proper foundation for *observation, experience, and analogy, the only guides*

LETTER

II.

guides we can reasonably follow in inferences of this nature. He immediately after observes, that “according to the antagonists of *Epicurus*, “the universe, an effect quite singular and “unparallel’d, is always supposed to be the “proof of a Deity, a cause no less singular “and unparallel’d.” If by calling the universe a singular and unparallel’d effect, he intends to signify that no other universe has come under our observation, it is very true: But it by no means follows, that we cannot argue from the evident marks of wisdom and design which we may observe in this universe that we do know, because we do not know any thing of any other universe. This grand universal system, and even that small part of it that we are more particularly acquainted with, comprehendeth such an amazing variety of phenomena, all which exhibit the most incontestable proofs of admirable wisdom, power, and diffusive goodness, so that one would think it scarce possible for a reasonable mind to resist the evidence. But such is this subtil metaphysical gentleman’s way of arguing in a matter of the highest consequence, the absurdity of which is obvious to any man of plain understanding. It is of a piece with what he had advanced before, that there is no such thing as cause or effect at all, nor can any probable inference be drawn from the one to the other, than which, as hath been already shewn, nothing can be more inconsistent

sistent with common sense, and the reason of LETTER II.
all mankind.

The other thing observable in this essay, and which seems to be the principal intention of it, relateth to the proof of a Providence and a Future State. He introduces his friend as putting himself in the place of *Epicurus*, and making an harangue to the people of *Athens*, to prove that the principles of his philosophy were as innocent and salutary as those of any other philosophers. The course of his reasoning or declamation is this. That “ the chief or sole argument
“ brought by philosophers for a divine Exist-
“ ence is derived from the order of nature ;
“ where there appear such marks of intelli-
“ gence and design, that they think it extra-
“ vagant to assign for its cause, either chance,
“ or the blind unguided force of matter. That
“ this is an argument drawn from effects to
“ causes ; and that when we infer any par-
“ ticular cause from an effect, we must pro-
“ portion the one to the other, and can never
“ be allowed to ascribe to the cause any
“ qualities, but what are exactly sufficient to
“ produce the effect. And if we ascribe to
“ it farther qualities, or affirm it capable of
“ producing any other effect, we only indulge
“ the licence of conjecture without reason
“ or authority.” § That therefore “ allow-
“ ing God to be the author of the existence

LETTER

II.

{

“ or order of the Universe, it follows, that he
 “ possesses that precise degree of power, intelli-
 “ gence, and benevolence, which appears in his
 “ workmanship, but nothing farther can ever be
 “ proved.” † Those therefore are vain rea-
 “ soners, and reverse the order of nature, who
 “ instead of regarding this present life, and
 “ the present scene of things as the sole
 “ object of their contemplation, render it a
 “ passage to something farther. The Divinity
 “ may indeed possibly possess attributes, which
 “ we have never seen exerted, and may be go-
 “ verned by principles of action, which we can-
 “ not discover to be satisfied : But we can never
 “ have reason to infer any attributes, or any
 “ principles of action in him, but so far as
 “ we know them to be exerted or satisfied.”
 He asks, “ are there any marks of distributive
 “ justice in the world”? And if it be said,
 that “ the justice of God exerts itself in part,
 “ but not in its full extent,” he answers, “ that
 “ we have no reason to give it any particular
 “ extent, but only so far as we see it at present
 “ exert itself. ‡” That “ indeed, when we
 “ find that any work has proceeded from the
 “ skill and industry of man, who is a being
 “ whom we know by experience, and whose
 “ nature we are acquainted with, we can draw
 “ a hundred inferences concerning what may
 “ be expected from him, and these inferences
 “ will all be founded on experience and ob-

† Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 220. ‡ *Ib.* p. 203.

“ servation

“ servation. But since the Deity is known^{LETTER}
 “ to us only by his productions, and is a^{II.}
 “ single being in the Universe, not compre-
 “ hended under any species or genus, from
 “ whose experienced attributes or qualities
 “ we can by analogy infer any attribute or
 “ quality in him, we can only infer such at-
 “ tributes or perfections, and such a degree
 “ of those attributes, as is precisely adapted
 “ to the effect we examine. But farther attributes
 “ or farther degrees of those attributes, we
 “ can never be authorized to infer or sup-
 “ pose by any rules of just reasoning.” He
 adds, that “ the great source of our mistakes
 “ on this subject is this. We tacitly consider
 “ ourselves as in the place of the Supreme Being,
 “ and conclude, that he will on every occasion
 “ observe the same conduct, which we ourselves
 “ in his situation would have embraced as
 “ reasonable and eligible. Whereas it must
 “ evidently appear contrary to all rules of
 “ analogy to reason from the intentions and
 “ projects of men to those of a Being so
 “ different, and so much superior—so remote
 “ and incomprehensible, who bears less a-
 “ nalogy to any other being in the universe,
 “ than the sun to a waxen taper.” He con-
 cludes therefore, “ that no new fact can ever
 “ be infer’d from the religious Hypothe-
 “ sis: no reward or punishment expected or
 “ dreaded beyond what is already known by

LETTER^{II.} “ practice and observation *.” This is a faithful extract of the argument in this essay, drawn together as closely as I could, without the repetitions with which it aboundeth.

I shall now make a few remarks upon it.

The whole of his reasoning depends upon this maxim, that when once we have traced an effect up to its cause, we can never ascribe any thing to the cause but what is precisely proportioned to the effect, and what we ourselves discern to be so: nor can we infer any thing farther concerning the cause, than what the effect, or the present appearance of it necessarily leads to. He had to the same purpose observed in a former essay; that “ it “ is allowed by all philosophers, that the “ effect is the measure of the power.” ‡ But this is far from being universally true. For we in many instances clearly perceive, that a cause can produce an effect which it doth not actually produce, or a greater effect than it hath actually produced. This gentleman’s whole reasoning proceeds upon confounding necessary and free causes; and indeed he seems not willing to allow any distinction between them, or that there are any other but necessary and material causes §. A necessary cause acts up to the utmost of its power, and therefore the effect must be exactly proportioned to it. But the case is manifestly different as

* Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 230, 231. ‡ *Ib.* p. 125.
§ *Ib.* p. 131, 132, 141, 151.

to free and voluntary causes. They may have LETTER II. a power of producing effects, which they do not actually produce. And as they act from discernment and choice, we may, in many cases, reasonably ascribe to them farther views than what we discern or discover in their present course of action. This author himself owns, that this may be reasonably done with respect to man whom we know by experience, and whose nature and conduct we are acquainted with; but denies that the same way of arguing will hold with respect to the Deity. But surely when once we come from the consideration of his works to the knowledge of a self-existent and absolutely perfect Being, we may from the nature of that self-existence and absolutely perfect cause reasonably conclude, that He is able to produce certain effects beyond what actually come under our present notice and observation, and indeed that He can do whatsoever doth not imply a contradiction. This Universe is a vast, a glorious, and amazing system, comprehending an infinite variety of parts. And it is but a small part of it that comes under our own more immediate notice. But we know enough to be convinced, that it demonstrateth a wisdom as well as power beyond all imagination great and wonderful. And we may justly conclude the same concerning those parts of the Universe that we are not acquainted with. And for any man to say, that we cannot reasonably ascribe any degree of wisdom or power to God but what is exactly propor-

LETTER
II.

tioned to that part of the universal frame which comes under our own particular observation, is a very strange way of arguing. The proofs of the wisdom and power of God, as appearing in our part of the system, are so striking, that it is hard to conceive, how any man that is not under the influence of the most obstinate prejudice, can refuse to submit to their force. And yet there are many phænomena, the reasons and ends of which we are not at present able to assign. The proper conduct in such a case, is to believe there are most wise reasons for these things, though we do not now discern those reasons, and to argue from the uncontested characters of wisdom in things that we do know, that this most wise and powerful agent, the author of nature, hath also acted with admirable wisdom in those things, the designs and ends of which we do not know. It would be wrong therefore to confine the measures of his wisdom precisely to what appeareth to our narrow apprehensions in that part of his works, which fallerth under our immediate inspection. This was the great fault of the *Epicureans*, and other atheistical philosophers, who judging by their own narrow views, urged several things as proofs of the want of wisdom and contrivance, which upon a fuller knowledge of the works of nature, furnish farther convincing proofs of the wisdom of the great Former of all things.

In

In like manner with respect to his goodness, LETTER II. there are numberless things in this present constitution, which lead us to regard him as a most benign and benevolent Being. And therefore it is highly reasonable, that when we meet with any phænomena, which we cannot reconcile with our ideas of the divine goodness, we should conclude, that it is only for want of having the whole of things before us, and considering them in their connexion and harmony, that they appear to us with a disorderly aspect. And it is very just in such a case to make use of any reasonable hypothesis, which tendeth to set the goodness of God in a fair and consistent light.

The same way of reasoning holds with regard to the justice and righteousness of God as the great Governor of the world. We may reasonably conclude from the intimate sense we have of the excellency of such a character, and the great evil and deformity of injustice and unrighteousness, which sense is implanted in us by the author of our beings, and from the natural rewards of virtue, and punishment of vice even in the present constitution of things; that he is a lover of righteousness and virtue, and an enemy to vice and wickedness. Our author himself makes his *Epicurean* friend acknowledge, that in the present order of things, virtue is attended with more peace of mind, and with many other

LETTER advantages above vice. * And yet it cannot be
 II. denied, that there are many instances obvious
 to common observation, in which vice seemeth
 to flourish and prosper, and virtue to be ex-
 posed to great evils and calamities. What is
 to be concluded from this? Is it that because
 the justice of God here sheweth itself only
in part, and not *in its full extent* (to use our
 author's expression) therefore righteousness as in
 God is imperfect in its degree, and that he doth
 not possess it in the full extent of that per-
 fection, nor will ever exert it any farther than
 we see him exert it in this present state? This
 were an unreasonable conclusion concerning
 a being of such admirable perfection, whose
 righteousness as well as wisdom must be sup-
 posed to be infinitely superior to ours. It is
 natural therefore to think that this present
 life is only a part of the divine scheme, which
 shall be compleated in a future state.

But he urgeth, that the great source of our
 mistakes on this subject is, that "we tacitly
 " consider ourselves as in the place of the su-
 " preme Being, and conclude that he will on
 " every occasion observe the same conduct,
 " which we ourselves in his situation would
 " have embraced as reasonable and eligible.
 " Whereas it must evidently appear contrary to
 " all rules of analogy, to reason from the inten-
 " tions and purposes of men to those of a Being
 " so different and so much superior, so re-

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 221.

“mote and incomprehensible†.” But though LETTER II. it were the highest absurdity to pretend to tie down the infinite incomprehensible Being to our scanty model, and measures of acting, and to assume that he will *on every occasion*, for so our author is pleased to put the case, observe the same conduct that we should judge eligible: since there may be innumerable things concerning which we are unable to form any proper judgment, for want of having the same comprehensive view of things that he hath: yet on the other hand, there are some cases so manifest that we may safely pronounce concerning them, as worthy or unworthy of the divine perfections. And as our own natures are the work of God, we may reasonably argue from the traces of excellencies in ourselves to the infinitely superior perfections in the great Author of the Universe, still taking care to remove all those limitations and defects with which those qualities are attended in us. Since therefore we cannot possibly help regarding goodness and benevolence, justice and righteousness, as necessary ingredients in a worthy and excellent character, and as among the noblest excellencies of an intellectual Being, we are unavoidably led to conclude, that they are to be found in the highest possible degree of eminency in the absolutely perfect Being, the Author and Governor of the world. These are not mere arbitrary suppositions, but are evidently founded in nature and reason.

† Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 230.

LETTER ^{IL} And though in many particular instances we through the narrowness of our views cannot be proper judges of the grounds and reasons of the divine administrations, yet in general we have reason to conclude, that if there be such a thing as goodness and righteousness in God, or any perfection in him correspondent to what is called goodness and righteousness in us, he will order it so that in the final issue of things a remarkable difference shall be made between the righteous and the wicked: that at one time or other, and taking in the whole of existence, virtue, though now for a time it may be greatly afflicted and oppressed, shall meet with its due reward; and vice and wickedness, though now it may seem to prosper and triumph, shall receive its proper punishment. Since therefore, by the observation of all ages, it hath often happened, that in the present course of human affairs, good and excellent persons have been unhappy, and exposed to many evils and sufferings; and bad and vicious men have been in very prosperous circumstances, and have had a large affluence of all worldly enjoyments even to the end of their lives; and that, as this gentleman himself elsewhere expresseth it, “such is the confusion and disorder of human affairs, that no perfect œconomy or regular distribution of happiness or misery, is in this life ever to be expected ‡.” It seems reasonable to conclude, that there shall be a future state of existence, in which these apparent irregularities shall be set

‡ Hume's Moral Political Essays, p. 244, 245.

right, and there shall be a more perfect distribution of rewards and punishments to men according to their moral conduct. There is nothing in this way of arguing but what is conformable to the soundest principles of reason, and to the natural feelings of the human heart. But though a future state of retributions in general be probable, yet as many doubts might still be apt to arise in our minds concerning it, an express revelation from God assuring us of it in his name, and more distinctly pointing out the nature and certainty of those retributions, would be of the most signal advantage.

I shall have occasion to resume this subject, when I come to consider what lord *Bolingbroke* hath more largely offered in relation to it. At present it is proper to observe that though Mr. *Hume* seems to allow his *Epicurean* friend's reasoning to be just, yet he owns, that "in fact men
 " do not reason after that manner; and that they
 " draw many consequences from the belief of
 " a divine existence, and suppose that the Deity
 " will inflict punishments on vice, and bestow
 " rewards on virtue, beyond what appears in the
 " ordinary course of nature. Whether this rea-
 " soning of theirs (adds he) be just or not, is no
 " matter; its influence on their life and conduct
 " must still be the same. And those who attempt
 " to disabuse them of such prejudices, may for
 " aught I know be good reasoners, but I can-
 " not allow them to be good citizens and poli-
 " ticians: since they free men from one restraint
 " upon

LETTER^{II.} “ upon their passions; and make the infringement of the laws of equity and society in one respect more easy and secure ||.” I think it follows from this by his own account, that he did not act a wise or good part, the part of a friend to the public or to mankind, in publishing this Essay, the manifest design of which is to persuade men, that there is no just foundation in reason for expecting a future state of rewards and punishments at all. Nor is the concession he here makes very favourable to what he addeth in the next page, concerning the universal liberty to be allowed by the state to all kinds of philosophy. According to his own way of representing it, *Epicurus* must have been cast, if he had pleaded his cause before the people; and the principal design of this Essay, which seems to be to shew not only the reasonableness, but harmlessness of that philosophy, is lost. For if the spreading of those principles and reasonings is contrary to the rules of good policy; and the character of good citizens, if they have a tendency to free them from a strong *restraint upon their passions*, and to make the *infringement of the laws of equity and society more easy and secure*; then such principles and reasonings, according to his way of representing the matter, ought in good policy to be restrain’d, as having a bad influence on the community.

There is one passage more in this essay, which may deserve some notice. It is in page 230,

|| Hume’s Philosophical Essays, p. 231.

where

where he observes that "God discovers himself
 " by some faint traces or out-lines, beyond
 " which we have no authority to ascribe to him
 " any attribute or perfection. What we imagine
 " to be a superior perfection may really be a
 " defect. Or, were it ever so much a perfection,
 " the ascribing it to the supreme Being, where
 " it appears not to have been really exerted to
 " the full in his works, favours more of flattery
 " and panegyric, than of just reasoning and
 " sound philosophy." The course of his argu-
 ing seems to be this. That it would favour of
flattery, not of *sound reasoning*, to ascribe any
 attribute or perfection to God, which *appears*
not to have been exerted to the full in his
works. And he had observed before, That "it
 " is impossible for us to know any thing of the
 " cause, but what we have antecedently, not in-
 " fer'd, but *discover'd to the full* in the effect*."
 It is plain therefore, that according to him we
 ought not to ascribe any perfection to God, but
 what is not merely *infer'd*, but *discover'd to the*
full in his works. It is also manifest, that accord-
 ing to him there is no attribute or perfection of
 the Deity exerted or discovered to the full in
 his works. For he had said just before, that he
discovers himself only by some faint traces or out-
lines. The natural conclusion from these pre-
 mises taken together is plainly this. That it
 would be flattery and presumption in us to ascribe
 any attribute or perfection to God at all. And

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 222.

LETTER II. now I leave it to you to judge of the obligations the world is under to this writer. In one part of this Essay he makes an attempt to subvert the proof of the existence of God, or a supreme intelligent cause of the universe. And here he insinuateth, that it would be wrong to ascribe any perfection or attribute to him at all. And the main design of the whole Essay is to shew, that no argument can be drawn from any of his perfections, to make it probable that there shall be rewards and punishments in a future state, though he acknowlegeth that it is of great advantage to mankind to believe them.

You will not wonder after this, that this gentleman, who hath endeavoured to shake the foundations of natural religion, should use his utmost efforts to subvert the evidences of the christian revelation. What he hath offered this way will be the subject of some future letters.



L E T T E R I I I .

An examination of Mr. Hume's Essay on Miracles. A summary of the first part of that Essay; which is designed to shew, that miracles are incapable of being proved by any testimony or evidence whatsoever. His main principle examined, that experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; and that miracles, being contrary to the established laws of nature, there is an uniform experience against the existence of any miracle. It is shewn, that no argument can be drawn from experience, to prove that miracles are impossible, or that they have not been actually wrought. Miracles not above the power of God, nor unworthy of his wisdom. Valuable ends may be assigned for miracles. They are capable of being proved by proper testimony. This applied to the resurrection of Christ. And it is shewn, that the evidence represented in Scripture is every way sufficient to satisfy us of the truth of it, supposing that evidence to have been really given as there represented.

S I R,

I Now proceed to consider Mr. Hume's celebrated Essay on Miracles, which is the tenth of his *Philosophical Essays*, and has been mightily

LETTER III. mightily admired and extoll'd, as a masterly and unanswerable piece. I think no impartial man will say so, that has read the ingenious and judicious answer made to it by the Rev. Mr. *Adams*, now Rector of *Shrewsbury*. It is intitled, "An Essay in answer to Mr. *Hume's* Essay on Miracles, by *William Adams*, M. A. That which I have by me is the second edition, with additions, *London*, 1754. Besides this, I have seen a short, but excellent discourse, by the Rev. Dr. *Rutherford*, entitled, "The credibility of Miracles defended against the author of the Philosophical Essays. In a discourse delivered at the primary visitation of the Right Rev. *Thomas* Lord Bishop of *Ely*,—*Cambridge*, 1751." These in my opinion are sufficient. But since you desire that I would also take a particular notice of Mr. *Hume's* Essay, I shall obey your commands, and enter on a distinct consideration of this boasted performance.

Mr. *Hume* introduceth his Essay on Miracles in a very pompous manner, as might be expected from one who sets up in his Philosophical Essays, for teaching men better methods of reasoning, than any Philosopher had done before him. He had taken care at every turn to let his readers know how much they are obliged to him for throwing new light on the most *curious* and *sublime subjects*, with regard to which the most celebrated philosophers had been *extremely defective* in their researches. And now he begins his Essay on Miracles with declaring That "he flatters himself that he has discovered an argu-
 4 " ment,

“ ment, which, if just, will, with the wise and
 “ learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds
 “ of superstitious delusion; and consequently,
 “ will be useful as long as the world endures.
 “ For so long, he presumes, will the account
 “ of miracles and prodigies be found in all
 “ profane history *.”

LETTER
 III.

This Essay consisteth of two parts. The first, which reacheth from p. 173 to p. 186, is designed to shew, that no evidence which can be given, however seemingly full and strong, can be a sufficient ground for believing the truth and existence of miracles: Or, in other words, that miracles are in the nature of things incapable of being proved by any evidence or testimony whatsoever. The second part is intended to shew, that supposing a miracle capable of being proved by full and sufficient evidence or testimony, yet in fact there never was a miraculous event in any history established upon such evidence. The first is what he seems principally to rely upon. And indeed, if this can be proved, it will make any particular enquiry into the testimony produced for miracles, needless.

The method he makes use of in the first part of his Essay, to shew, that no evidence or testimony that can be given is a sufficient ground for a reasonable assent to the truth and existence of miracles, is this. He lays it down as an undoubted principle: That experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact, and at the same time insinuates, that this guide

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 174.

LETTER

III.



is far from being infallible, and is apt to lead us into errors and mistakes. He observes, That the validity and credibility of human testimony is wholly founded upon experience: That in judging how far a testimony is to be depended upon, we balance the opposite circumstances, which may create any doubt or uncertainty: That the evidence arising from testimony may be destroyed, either by the contrariety and opposition of the testimony, or by the consideration of the nature of the facts themselves: That when the facts partake of the *marvellous* and *extraordinary*, there are two opposite experiences with regard to them; and that which is the most credible is to be preferred, though still with a diminution of its credibility in proportion to the force of the other which is opposed to it: That this holdeth still more strongly in the case of miracles, which are supposed to be contrary to the laws of nature. For experience being our only guide; and an uniform experience having established those laws, there must be an uniform experience against the existence of any miracle: And an uniform experience amounts to a full and entire proof. To suppose therefore any testimony to be a proof of a miracle, is to suppose one full proof for a miracle, opposed to another full proof in the nature of the thing against it, in which case those proofs destroy one another. Finally, That we are not to believe any testimony concerning a miracle, except the falshood of that testimony should be more miraculous than the miracle itself which

it

it is designed to establish. He also gives a hint, LETTER
III.
 that as it is impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of God, otherwise than from the experience which we have of his productions, we cannot be sure that he can effect miracles, which are contrary to all our experience, and the established course of nature: And therefore miracles are impossible to be proved by any evidence.

Having given this general idea of this first part of Mr. *Hume's* Essay on Miracles, I shall now proceed to a more particular examination of it.

It is manifest that the main principle, which lieth at the foundation of his whole scheme, is this: That experience is our only "guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact*." You will have observed, from what hath been remarked in my former letters, that this author brings up the word *experience* upon all occasions. It is, as he hath managed it, a kind of cant term, proposed in a loose indeterminate way, so that it is not easy to form a clear idea of it, or of what this writer precisely intends by it. He had declared, that it is only by experience that we come to know the existence of objects: That it is only by experience that we know the relation between cause and effect: And at the same time had endeavoured to shew, that experience cannot furnish so much as even a probable argument concerning any connection betwixt cause and effect, or by which we can draw any con-

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 174.

LETTER
III.

clusion from the one to the other. He had afterwards applied the same term experience, to shew that no argument can be brought to prove the existence of one supreme intelligent cause of the Universe; because this is *a subject that lies intirely beyond the reach of human experience*, and that we can have no proof of a future state of retributions, because we know no more concerning providence, than what we learn from experience in this present state. And now he comes to try the force of this formidable word against the existence of miracles, and to raise an argument against them from experience.

But that we may not lose ourselves in the ambiguity of the term as he employs it, let us distinctly examine what sense it bears as applied to the present question. In judging of the truth of the maxim he hath laid down, *viz.* that experience is our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it is to be considered, that the question we are now upon properly relates not to future *events*, as the author seems sometimes to put it*, but to past matter of fact. What are we therefore to understand by that experience, which he makes to be our only guide in reasoning concerning them? Is it our own particular personal experience, or is it the experience of others as well as our own? And if of others, is it the experience of some others only, or of all mankind? If it be understood thus, that every man's own personal observation and experience is

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 175.

to be his only guide in reasoning concerning LETTER
 matters of fact; so that no man is to believe any III.
 thing with relation to any facts whatsoever, but
 what is agreeable to what he hath himself ob-
 served or known in the course of his own par-
 ticular experience; this would be very absurd,
 and would reduce each man's knowlege of facts
 into a very narrow compass; it would destroy
 the use and credit of history, and of a great part
 of experimental philosophy, and bring us into
 a state of general ignorance and barbarism. Or,
 is the word Experience to be taken in a larger
 and more extensive sense, as comprehending not
 merely any particular man's experience, but that
 of others too? In this case we have no way of
 knowing experience, but by testimony. And
 here the question recurs; Is it to be understood
 of the experience of all mankind, or of some
 persons only? If the experience referred to be
 the experience or observation of some persons
 only, or of a part of mankind, how can this be
 depended on as a certain guide? For why should
 their experience be the guide, exclusively of that
 of others? And how do we know, but that many
 facts may be agreeable to the experience of
 others, which are not to theirs? But if the ex-
 perience referred to be the experience of all man-
 kind in general, that must take in the experience
 both of all men in the present age, and of those
 in past times and ages; and it must be acknow-
 ledged, that this rule and criterion is not easily ap-
 plicable. For will any man say, that we are to
 believe no facts but what are agreeable to the
 E 3 experience

LETTER III. experience of mankind in all ages? Are we in order to this, to take in whatsoever any man or men in any age or country have had experience of? And to judge by this, how far it is reasonable to believe any past facts, or facts of which we ourselves have not had sensible evidence? Even on this view of the case, it might probably take in many facts of a very extraordinary nature, and which have happened out of the common course of things; of which there have been instances in the experience and observation of different nations and ages. And at this rate experience will not be inconsistent with the belief even of miracles themselves, of which there have been several instances recorded in the history of mankind.

But farther, in reasoning from experience, either our own or that of others, concerning matters of fact, it is to be considered, what it is that we propose to judge or determine by experience in relation to them. Is it whether these facts are possible, or whether they are probable, or whether they have been actually done? As to the possibility of facts, experience indeed, or the observation of similar events known to ourselves or others, may assure us that facts or events are possible, but not that the contrary is impossible. Concerning this, experience cannot decide any thing at all. We cannot conclude any event to be impossible, merely because we have had no experience of the like, or because it is contrary to our own observation and experience, or

to

to the experience of others. For as this gentleman observes in another part of his Essays, LETTER
III.
 “ The contrary of every matter of fact is still
 “ possible ; because it can never imply a con-
 “ tradiction *.” And again he says, speaking
 of matters of fact, “ there are no demonstra-
 “ tive arguments in the case, since it implies
 “ no contradiction, that the course of nature
 “ may change †.” No argument therefore can
 be brought to demonstrate any thing or fact to
 be impossible, merely because it is contrary to
 the course of our own observation and expe-
 rience, or that of mankind, provided it doth
 not imply a contradiction, or provided there be
 a power capable of effecting it. Another thing
 to be considered, with regard to facts, is whether
 they are probable : And here experience, or the
 observation of similar events, made by ourselves
 or others, may be of great use to assist us in form-
 ing a judgment concerning the probability of
 past facts, or in forming conjectures concerning
 future ones. But if the question be, Whether
 an event has actually happened, or a fact has been
 done, concerning this, experience taken from
 an observation of similar events, or the ordi-
 nary course of causes and effects, cannot give
 us any assurance or certainty to proceed upon.
 We cannot certainly conclude, that any fact or
 event has been done, merely because we or
 others have had experience or observation of a
 fact or event of a like nature. Nor on the other

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 48. † *Ib.* 62.

LETTER hand can we conclude, that such a certain event
 III. hath not happened, or that such a fact hath not
 been actually done, because we have not had
 experience of a like action or event being done,
 or have had experience of the contrary being
 done. The rule therefore which he lays down
 of judging which side is supported by the greater
 number of experiments, and of balancing the
 opposite experiments, and deducting the lesser
 number from the greater, in order to know the
 exact force of the superior evidence*, is very
 uncertain and fallacious, if employed in judging
 whether matters of fact have really been done.
 For the fact referred to, and the evidence at-
 tending it, may be so circumstanced, that tho'
 it be a fact of a singular nature, and to which
 many instances of a different kind may be op-
 posed, we may yet have such an assurance of its
 having been actually done, as may reasonably
 produce a sufficient conviction in the mind.
 The proper way of judging whether a fact or
 event, of which we ourselves have not had sen-
 sible evidence, hath been actually done, is by
 competent testimony. And this in common lan-
 guage is distinguished from experience, though
 this writer artfully confounds them.

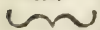
This therefore is what we are next to con-
 sider, *viz.* the force of human testimony, and
 how far it is to be depended upon.

And with regard to the validity of the evi-
 dence arising from human testimony, he ob-

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 176.

serves, That “there is no species of reasoning
 “more common, more useful, and even neces-
 “sary to human life, than that derived from
 “the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-
 “witnesses and spectators.” The whole cer-
 tainty or assurance arising from testimony he re-
 solveth into what he calls *past experience*. That
 “it is derived from no other principle than our
 “observation of the veracity of human testi-
 “mony, and of the usual conformity of facts
 “to the report of witnesses.” And he men-
 tions as grounds of the belief of human testi-
 mony, that “men have commonly an inclina-
 “tion to truth, and a sentiment of probity;
 “that they are sensible to shame when detected
 “in a falshood; and that these are qualities dis-
 “covered by experience to be inherent in hu-
 “man nature*.” But he might have put the
 case much more strongly by observing, that hu-
 man testimony, by the acknowledgement of
 all mankind, may be so circumstanced, as to pro-
 duce an infallible assurance, or an evidence so
 strong, that as our author expresseth it in another
 case, none *but a fool or a madman* would doubt
 of it. It is a little too loose to say in general,
 that it is *founded only on past experience*. It
 hath its foundation in the very nature of things,
 in the constitution of the world and of mankind,
 and in the appointment of the Author of our
 Beings, who it is manifest hath formed and de-
 signed us to be in numberless instances deter-

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 176, 177.

LETTER
III.

mined by this evidence, which often comes with such force, that we cannot refuse our assent to it without the greatest absurdity, and putting a manifest constraint upon our nature*. Mr. *Hume* himself, in his Essay on Liberty and Necessity, hath run a parallel between moral and physical evidence, and hath endeavoured to shew that the one is as much to be depended on as the other. He expressly saith, that “when
“ we consider how aptly natural and moral evi-
“ dence link together, and form only one chain
“ of argument, we shall make no scruple to
“ allow, that they are of the same nature, and
“ derived from the same principles†.”

It will be easily granted, what our author here observes, That “there are a number of circum-
“ stances to be taken into consideration in all
“ judgments of this kind: And that we must
“ balance the opposite circumstances that create
“ any doubt or uncertainty, and when we dis-
“ cover a superiority on any side, we incline to
“ it, but still with a diminution of assurance in
“ proportion to the force of its antagonist‡.” Among the particulars, which may diminish or destroy the force of any argument drawn from human testimony, he mentions the contrariety of the evidence, contradictions of witnesses, their suspicious character, &c. And then proceeds to take notice of “what may be drawn
“ from the nature of the fact attested, suppo-

* See concerning this, *Ditton on the Resurrection*, Part 2.

† *Hume's Philosophical Essays*, p. 144. ‡ *Ib.* p. 177.

“sing it to partake of the extraordinary and the
 “marvellous.” He argueth, that “in that case
 “the evidence resulting from the testimony re-
 “ceives a diminution greater or less in propor-
 “tion as the fact is more or less unusual. When
 “the fact attested is such a one as has seldom
 “fallen under our observation, here is a contest
 “of two opposite experiences, of which the one
 “destroys the other as far as its force goes;
 “and the superior can only operate upon the
 “mind by the force which remains.” This is
 a plausible, but a very fallacious way of reason-
 ing. A thing may be very unusual, and yet,
 if confirmed by proper testimony, its being un-
 usual may not diminish its credit, or produce in
 the mind of a thinking person a doubt or sus-
 picion concerning it. Indeed vulgar minds,
 who judge of every thing by their own narrow
 notions, and by what they themselves have seen,
 are often apt to reject and disbelieve a thing, that
 is not conformable to their own particular
 customs or experience. But wiser men, and
 those of more enlarged minds judge otherwise:
 and provided a thing comes to them sufficiently
 attested and confirmed by good evidence, make
 its being unusual no objection at all to its credi-
 bility. Many uncommon facts, and unusual
 phenomena of nature, are believed by the most
 sagacious philosophers, and received as true
 without hesitation upon the testimony of persons
 who are worthy of credit, without following
 the author’s rules; or making their own want

LETTER
 III.


LETTER of experience or observation an objection against
 III. those accounts. And upon this dependeth no
 small part of our knowlege. Mr. *Adams* hath
 very well illustrated this by several instances,
 and hath justly observed, That the most uniform
 experience is sometimes outweighed by a single
 testimony; because experience in this case is
 only a negative evidence, and the slightest po-
 sitive testimony is for the most part an over-bal-
 lance to the strongest negative evidence that can
 be produced*.

Our author here very improperly talks of a
contest between two opposite experiences, the
 one of which destroys the other. For when I
 believe a thing unusual, I do not believe a thing
 opposite to mine own experience, but different
 from it, or a thing of which I have had no ex-
 perience; though if it were a thing contrary to
 my own experience, provided it were confirmed
 by sufficient testimony, this is not a valid argu-
 ment against its truth, nor a sufficient reason for
 disbelieving it. This gentleman himself hath
 mentioned a remarkable instance of this kind
 in the *Indian Prince*, who refused to believe the
first relations concerning the effects of frost.
 This instance, though he laboureth the point
 here, and in an additional note at the end of
 his book, is not at all favourable to his scheme.
 He acknowledgeth, that in this case of freezing,
 the event follows *contrary to the rules of ana-*
logy, and is SUCH AS A RATIONAL INDIAN

* *Adams's Essay*, in answer to *Hume on Miracles*, p. 19, 20.

would

would not look for. The constant experience LETTER
III.
in those countries, according to which the waters are always fluid, and never in a state of hardness and solidity, is against freezing. This according to his way of reasoning might be regarded as a *proof* drawn from constant experience, and the uniform course of nature, as far as they knew it. Here then is an instance, in which it is reasonable for men to believe upon good evidence an event no way conformable to their experience, and contrary to the rule of analogy, which yet he seems to make the only rule by which we are to judge of the credibility and truth of facts.

From the consideration of facts that are unusual, he proceeds to those that are miraculous, which is what he hath principally in view. And with regard to these he endeavoureth to shew that no testimony at all is to be admitted. "Let us suppose, saith he, that the fact which they affirm, instead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous; and suppose also that the testimony considered apart, and in itself, amounts to an entire proof; in that case, there is proof against proof, of which the strongest must prevail, but still with a diminution of its force in proportion to that of its antagonist*." It may be proper to remark here, that this writer had in a former Essay defined a proof to be *such an argument drawn from experience as leaves no room for doubt or opposition*†. Admitting

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 180. † *Ib.* p. 93.

LETTER III. this definition, it is improper and absurd for him to talk of *proof against proof*. For since a proof, according to his own account of it, leaves no room for doubt or opposition; where there is a proper proof of a fact, there cannot be a proper proof at the same time against it: For one truth cannot contradict another truth. And no doubt his intention is to signify that there can be no proof given of a miracle at all, and that the proof is only on the other side. For as he there adds, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience hath established those laws" [he should have said, hath discovered to us that these are the established laws, *i. e.* that this is the ordinary course of nature] "the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined." He repeats this again afterward, and observes, that "there must be an uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit the appellation; and as an uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle*." He seems to have a very high opinion of the force of this way of reasoning, and therefore takes care to put his reader again in mind of it in the latter part of his Essay. "'Tis experience alone, & faith he, which gives authority to human te-

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 181.

“simony; and 'tis the same experience that
 “assures us of the laws of nature. When there-
 “fore these two kinds of experience are con-
 “trary, we have nothing to do, but to subtract
 “the one from the other—And this subtraction
 “with regard to all popular religions amounts
 “to an entire annihilation*.” And it is chiefly
 upon this that he foundeth the arrogant censure,
 which, with an unparalleled assurance, he
 passeth upon all that believe the Christian re-
 ligion, *viz.* That “whosoever is moved by faith
 “to assent to it, is conscious of a continued
 “miracle in his own person, which subverts all
 “the principles of his understanding, and gives
 “him a determination to believe whatever is
 “most contrary to custom and experience.” It
 is thus that he concludes his Essay, as if he had
 forever silenc'd all the advocates for Christianity,
 and they must henceforth either renounce their
 faith, or submit to pass with men of his superior
 understanding for persons miraculously stupid,
 and utterly lost to all reason and common sense.

Let us therefore examine what there is in this
 argument, that can support such a peculiar strain
 of confidence; and I believe it will appear, that
 never was there weaker reasoning set off with
 so much pomp and parade.

There is one general observation that may be
 sufficiently obvious to any man, who brings with
 him common sense and attention, and which
 is alone sufficient to shew the fallacy of this

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 202, 203.

LETTER
III.

boasted argument. And it is this. That the proof arising from experience, on which he layeth so mighty a stress, amounteth to no more than this, that we learn from it what is conformable to the ordinary course and order of things, but we cannot learn or pronounce from experience that it is impossible things, or events, should happen in any particular instance contrary to that course. We cannot therefore pronounce such an event, though it be contrary to the usual course of things, to be impossible, in which case no testimony whatsoever could prove it. And if it be possible, there is place for testimony. And this testimony may be so strong, and so circumstanced, as to make it reasonable for us to believe it. And if we have sufficient evidence to convince us that such an event hath actually happened, however extraordinary or miraculous, no argument drawn from experience can prove that it hath not happened. I would observe by the way, that when this gentleman talks of an *uniform experience*, and a *firm and unalterable experience* against the existence of all miracles, if he means by it, such an universal experience of all mankind, as hath never been counteracted in any single instance, this is plainly supposing the very thing in question; and which he hath no right to suppose, because, by his own acknowledgement, mankind have believed in all ages that miracles have been really wrought. By uniform experience therefore in this argument must be understood the general or ordinary experience

perience of mankind in the usual course of things. LETTER
III.
 And it is so far from being true, as he confidently affirms, that such an uniform experience amounts to a *full* and direct *proof* from the nature of the fact against the existence of any miracle, that it is no proof against it at all. Let us judge of this by his own definition of a miracle. “A miracle, saith he, may be accurately defined, a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposal of some invisible agent.” Now our uniform experience affordeth a full and direct proof, that such or such an event is agreeable to the established laws of nature, or to the usual course of things, but it yieldeth no proof at all, that there cannot in any particular instance happen any event contrary to that usual course of things, or to what we have hitherto experienced; or that such an event may not be brought about by a particular volition of the Deity, as our author expresseth it, for valuable ends worthy of his wisdom and goodness.

He cannot therefore make his argument properly bear, except he can prove, that miracles are absolutely impossible. And this is what he sometimes seems willing to attempt. Thus speaking of some miracles pretended to have been fully attested, he asks, “What have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility, or miraculous nature of the event*?” Where he seems to make the

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 195.

LETTER III. *miraculous nature* of an event, and the *absolute impossibility* of it, to be the same thing. And he elsewhere makes an attempt to prove, that we have no reason to think, that God himself can effect a miracle. He urges, that “though the Being, to whom the miracle is ascribed, be in this case Almighty, it does not, upon that account, become a whit more probable; since ’tis impossible for us to know the attributes or actions of such a Being, otherwise than from the experience we have of his productions, in the usual course of nature*.” But when once we conclude from the effects in the works of nature, that he is Almighty, as this gentleman seems here to grant, we may from his being Almighty, reasonably infer, that he can do many things, which we do not know that he hath actually done, and can produce many effects, which he hath not actually produced. For an Almighty Being can do any thing that doth not imply a contradiction. And it can never be proved, that a miracle, or an event contrary to the usual course of nature, implieth a contradiction. This writer himself expressly acknowledgeth, in a passage I cited before, that “it implies no contradiction, that the course of nature may change†.” And he repeats it again afterwards, that “the course of nature may change‡.” And as to the extraordinariness of any fact, he saith, that “even in the most

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 95.
 ‡ *Ib.* p. 65.

† *Ib.* p. 62.

... familiar

“ familiar events, the energy of the cause is LETTER III.
 “ as unintelligible, as in the most extraordinary
 “ and unusual*.” What we call the course of nature is the appointment of God, and the continuance of it dependeth upon his power and will. It is no more difficult to him, to act contrary to it in any particular instance than to act according to it. The one is in itself as easy to Almighty Power as the other. The true question then is concerning the divine will, whether it can be supposed, that God, having established the course of nature, will ever permit or order a deviation from that regular course, which his own wisdom hath established. And with regard to this, it will be readily granted, that it is highly proper and wisely appointed, that in the ordinary state of things, what are commonly called the laws of nature should be maintained, and that things should generally go on in a fixed stated course and order; without which there could be no regular study or knowledge of nature, no use or advantage of experience, either for the acquisition of science, or the conduct of life. But though it is manifestly proper, that these laws, or this course of things, should generally take place, it would be an inexcusable presumption to affirm, that God, having established these laws, and this course of nature in the beginning, hath bound himself never to act otherwise than according to those laws. There may be very good reasons worthy of his great wisdom

* Hume's Philosophical Essays. p. 114.

LETTER for his acting sometimes contrary to the usual
 III. order of things. Nor can it in that case be justly pretended, that this would be contrary to the immutability of God, which is *Spinoza's* great argument against miracles: For those very variations, which appear so extraordinary to us, are comprehended within the general plan of his providence, and make a part of his original design. The same infinite wisdom, which appointed or established those natural laws, did also appoint the deviations from them, or that they should be over-ruled on some particular occasions; which occasions were also perfectly foreseen from the beginning by his all-comprehending mind. If things were always to go on without the least variation in the stated course, men might be apt to overlook or question a most wise governing providence, and to ascribe things (as some have done) to a fixed immutable fate or blind necessity, which they call nature. It may therefore be becoming the wisdom of God, to appoint that there should be, on particular occasions, deviations from the usual established course of things. Such extraordinary operations and appearances may tend to awaken in mankind a sense of a Supreme Disposer and Governor of the world, who is a most wise and free as well as powerful Agent, and hath an absolute dominion over nature; and may also answer important ends and purposes of moral government, for displaying God's justice and mercy, but especially for giving attestation to the divine mission

sion of persons, whom he seeth fit to send on LETTER
III. extraordinary errands for instructing and reforming mankind, and for bringing discoveries of the highest importance to direct men to true religion and happiness.

It appeareth then that no argument can be brought from experience to prove, either that miracles are impossible to the power of God, or that they can never be agreeable to his will. And therefore it is far from yielding a direct and full proof against the existence of miracles. It may illustrate this to consider some of the instances he himself mentions. "Lead cannot of itself remain suspended in the air: Fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water." Our uniform experience proves, that this is the usual and ordinary course of things, and agreeable to the known laws of nature: It proves, that lead cannot naturally and ordinarily, or by its own force, be suspended in the air; but it affordeth no proof at all, that it cannot be thus suspended in a particular instance by the will of God, or by a supernatural force or power. In like manner our experience proves, that fire consumes wood in the natural course of things, but it yieldeth no proof that in a particular instance the force of the fire may not be suspended or over-ruled, and the wood preserved from being consumed by the interposal of an invisible agent. Another instance he mentions is, that "it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life: Because that has never been observed in any

LETTER "age or country *." But its never having been
 III. observed, if that had been the case, would have
 furnished no proof at all that a dead man cannot
 be raised to life by the power and will of God,
 when a most valuable and important end is to
 be answered by it. And if we have good evi-
 dence to convince us, that a man had been really
 dead, and that man was afterwards really restored
 to life (and this is a matter of fact of which our
 senses can judge, as well as of any other fact
 whatsoever) no argument can be drawn from
 experience to prove, that it could not be so.
 Our experience would indeed afford a proof,
 that no merely natural human power could effect
 it; or that it is a thing really miraculous, and
 contrary to the usual course of nature: But it
 would not amount to a full and direct proof,
 or indeed to any proof at all, that it could not
 be effected by the divine power.

And now we may judge of the propriety of
 the inference he draws from the argument as he
 had managed it. "The plain consequence is,"
 saith he, "and 'tis a general maxim worthy
 of our attention, that no testimony is suf-
 ficient to establish a miracle, unless the testi-
 mony be of such a kind, that its falsehood
 would be more miraculous than the fact which
 it endeavours to establish. And even in that
 case, there is a mutual destruction of argu-
 ments, and the superiority only gives us an
 assurance suitable to that degree of force,

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 181.

" which

“ which remains after deducting the inferior LETTER
III.
 “ When any one tells me, that he saw a dead
 “ man restored to life, I immediately consult
 “ with myself whether it be more probable, that
 “ this person should either deceive or be de-
 “ ceived, or that the fact he relates should really
 “ have happened : I weigh the one miracle
 “ against the other, and according to the supe-
 “ riority which I discover, I pronounce my
 “ decision, and always reject the greater mi-
 “ racle *.”

You cannot but observe here, this writer's jingle upon the word miracle. As he had talked of proof against proof, so he here talks as if in the case he is supposing there were miracle against miracle; or as if the question were concerning two extraordinary miraculous facts, the one of which is opposed to the other. But whereas in that case one should think the greater miracle ought to take place against the lesser, this gentleman, with whom miracle and absurdity is the same thing, declares that he always *rejects the greater miracle*. But to quit this poor jingle, it is allowed that the raising a dead man to life, must, if ever it happened, have been a very signal miracle; *i. e.* as he defines it, a violation of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity. The question therefore is, Whether any evidence is given, which may be depended on, to assure us, that however strange or extraordinary this event may be, yet it hath

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 182.

LETTER

III.

actually happened. That the thing itself is possible to the Deity, however it be contrary to the usual course of nature, cannot be reasonably contested: Because it cannot be proved to involve a contradiction, or any thing beyond the reach of almighty power. For it would be to the last degree absurd to say, that he who formed this stupendous system, or who contrived and fabricated the wonderful frame of the human body, and originally gave it a principle of life, could not raise a dead man to life. It would be a contradiction, that the same man should be living and dead at the same time, but not that he that was dead should afterwards be restored to life. And therefore if it be the will of God, and his wisdom and goodness seeth it proper for answering any very important purposes, he is able to effect it. But then whether he hath actually effected it, is another question. And here it will be readily owned, that in a case of so extraordinary a nature, the evidence or testimony upon which we receive it, ought to be very strong and cogent.

Mr. *Hume* is pleased here to put the case in a very loose and general way. "When any
 " one tells me (saith he) that he saw a dead
 " man restored to life, I immediately consider
 " with myself, whether it be more probable,
 " that this person should either deceive or be
 " deceived, or that the fact he relates should
 " really have happened." He puts it, as if there was nothing to depend upon but the testimony
 of

of a single person, without any assignable reason for so extraordinary an event. And when thus proposed, naked of all circumstances, no wonder that it hath an odd appearance. But that we may bring the question to a fair issue, let us apply it to what our author without doubt had principally in his view, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Taking the case therefore according to the representation given of it in the holy Scriptures, let us examine whether, supposing all those circumstances to concur which are there exhibited, they do not amount to a full and satisfactory evidence, sufficient to lay a just foundation for a reasonable assent to it. Let us then suppose, that in a series of writings, published by different persons in different ages, and all of them uncontestably written long before the event happened, a glorious and wonderful Person was foretold, and described by the most extraordinary characters, who should be sent from heaven to teach and instruct mankind, to guide them in the way of salvation, and to introduce an excellent dispensation of truth and righteousness: That not only the nation and family from which he was to spring, the place of his birth, and time of his appearing, was distinctly pointed out, but it was foretold that he should endure the most grievous sufferings and death, and that afterwards he should be exalted to a divine dominion and glory, and that the Gentiles should be enlightened by his doctrine, and receive his law: That accordingly, at the
time

LETTER III. time which had been signified in those predictions, that admirable person appeared: That he taught a most pure and heavenly doctrine, prescribed the most holy and excellent laws, and brought the most perfect scheme of religion which had ever been published to the world; and at the same time exhibited in his own sacred life and practice an example of the most consummate holiness and goodness: That in proof of his divine mission he performed the most wonderful works, manifestly transcending the utmost efforts of all human power or skill, and this in a vast number of instances, and in the most open and public manner, for a course of years together: That he most clearly and expressly foretold, that he was to undergo the most grievous sufferings, and a cruel and ignominious death, and should afterwards rise again from the dead on the third day: And to this he appealed as the most convincing proof of his divine mission: That accordingly he suffered the death of the cross in the face of a vast multitude of spectators: And notwithstanding the chief men of the *Jewish* nation, by whose instigation he was crucified, took the most prudent and effectual precautions to prevent an imposition in this matter, he rose again from the dead at the time appointed with circumstances of great glory, in a manner which struck terror into the guards, who were set to watch the sepulchre: That afterwards he shewed himself alive to many of those who were most intimately acquainted with him, and who,

far from discovering a too forward credulity, LETTER
III. could not be brought to believe it, till they found themselves constrained to do so by the testimony of all their senses: That as a farther proof of his resurrection and exaltation, they who witnessed it were themselves enabled to perform the most wonderful miracles in his name, and by power derived from him, and were endued with the most extraordinary gifts and powers, that they might spread his religion through the world, amidst the greatest oppositions and discouragements: That accordingly this religion, though propagated by the seemingly meanest and most unlikely instruments, and not only destitute of all worldly advantages, but directly opposite to the prevailing superstitious, prejudices and vices both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and though it exposed its publishers and followers to all manner of reproaches, persecutions and sufferings, yet in that very age made the most surprising progress, in consequence of which the religion of Jesus was established in a considerable part of the world, and to continueth unto this day. Such is the view of the evidence of the resurrection of Jesus. And taking it altogether, it forms such a concatenation of proofs, as is every way suitable to the importance of the fact, and which was never equal'd in any other case. And to suppose all this evidence, to have been given in attestation to a falshood, involveth in it the most palpable absurdities. It is to suppose, either that God would employ his own
 presence

LETTER III. prescience and power to give testimony to an impostor, by a series of the most illustrious prophecies, and numerous uncontrouled miracles: Or that good Beings superior to man would extraordinarily interpose for the same purpose, to countenance and derive credit to a person falsely pretending to be sent from God, and feigning to act in his name: Or, that evil spirits would use all their arts and power to attest and confirm a religion, the manifest tendency of which was to destroy idolatry, superstition and vice, where-ever it was sincerely believed and embraced, and to recover mankind to holiness and happiness; which is a contradiction to their very nature and character: It is to suppose that a number of persons would combine in attesting falsehoods in favour of a person who they knew had deceived them, and of a religion contrary to their most inveterate and favourite prejudices, and by which they had a prospect of gaining nothing but misery, reproach, sufferings, and death; which is absolutely contrary to all the principles and passions of the human nature: It is to suppose that persons of the greatest simplicity and plainness would act the part of the vilest impostors: Or, that men who were so bad, so false, and impious, as to be capable of carrying on a series of the most solemn impositions in the name of God himself, would at the hazard of all that is dear to men, and in manifest opposition to all their worldly interests, endeavour

endeavour to bring over the nations to embrace ^{LETTER} a holy and self-denying institution: Or, that if ^{III.} they were enthusiasts, who were carried away by the heat of their own distempered brains to imagine, that for a series of years together the most extraordinary facts were done before their eyes, though no such things were done at all, and that they were themselves enabled actually to perform the most wonderful works in the most open and public manner, though they performed no such works; it is to suppose that such mad enthusiasts, who were also mean and contemptible in their condition, and for the most part ignorant and illiterate, were not only capable of forming the noblest scheme of religion which was ever published to mankind, but were able to overcome all the learning, wealth, power, eloquence of the world, all the bigotry, and superstition of the nations, all the influence and artifices of the priests, all the power and authority of the magistrates: That they did this by only alleging they had a commission in the name of a person who had been crucified, whom they affirmed, but without giving any proof of it, to have been risen from the dead, and to be exalted as the Saviour and Lord of mankind. All this is such a complication of absurdities, as cannot be admitted but upon principles that are absolutely abhorrent to the common sense and reason of men. It were easy to enlarge farther on this subject, but this may suffice at present; especially

LETTER III. especially considering that Mr. *Adams* hath urged many things to this purpose with great clearness and force, in his answer to Mr. *Hume's* Essay, p 31-36. And what is there to oppose to all this? Nothing but the single difficulty of restoring a dead man to life, which is indeed a very extraordinary and miraculous event, but is not above the power of God to effect, and supposing a good and valid reason can be assigned for it worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, involveth in it no absurdity at all. And such a reason it certainly was to give an illustrious attestation to the divine mission of the Holy Jesus, and to the divine original of the most excellent dispensation of religion that was ever published among men. To talk, as this author does, of the diminution of the evidence in proportion to the difficulty of the case is trifling. For the evidence is here supposed to be fully proportioned to the difficulty and importance of the case: Since both there is a power assigned every way able to effect it, and a valuable end which makes it reasonable to think it was becoming the divine wisdom and goodness to interpose for effecting it.

You will perhaps think this may be sufficient with regard to the first part of Mr. *Hume's* Essay on Miracles. In my next I shall endeavour to make it appear, that we have the highest reason to think that the evidence, which hath been argued to be sufficient if given, was really and
actually

actually given : And shall answer the several LETTER
III. considerations he hath offered to shew that sup-
posing miracles capable of being proved by evi-
dence or testimony, yet no evidence was ever
actually given for miracles, which can be rea-
sonably depended upon.



LETTER

IV.

LETTER IV.

Reflections on the second part of Mr. Hume's Essay on Miracles, which is designed to shew, that in fact there never was a miraculous event established upon such evidence as can be depended on. What he offers concerning the necessary conditions and qualifications of witnesses in the case of miracles considered. It is shewn that the witnesses to the miracles in proof of Christianity had all the conditions and qualifications, that can be required to render any testimony good and valid. Concerning the proneness of mankind in all ages to believe wonders, especially in matters of religion. This no reason for rejecting all miracles without farther examination. The miracles wrought in proof of Christianity not done in an ignorant and barbarous age. His pretence that different miracles wrought in favour of different religions destroy one another, and shew that none of them are true. The absurdity of this way of reasoning shewn. Instances produced by him of miracles well attested, and which yet ought to be rejected as false and incredible. A particular examination of what he hath offered concerning the miracles attributed to the Abbé de Paris, and which he pretends much surpass those of our Saviour in credit and authority.

S I R,

I Now proceed to consider the second part of Mr. *Hume's* Essay on Miracles. The first
was

was designed to shew, that miracles are incapable of being proved by any evidence whatsoever, and that no evidence or testimony that could be given, let us suppose it never so full and strong, would be a sufficient ground for believing the truth and existence of miracles. And now in his second part he proceeds to shew, that supposing a miracle capable of being proved by full and sufficient evidence or testimony, yet in fact there never was a *miraculous event* in any history established upon such evidence as can reasonably be depended upon. To this purpose he offereth several considerations. The first is designed to prove, that no witnesses have ever been produced for any miracle, which have all the necessary conditions and qualifications, to render their testimony credible. The second consideration is drawn from the proneness there has been in mankind in all ages to believe wonders; and the more for their being absurd and incredible; especially in matters of religion; and that therefore in this case all men of sense should reject them without farther examination. His third observation is, that they are always found to abound most among ignorant and barbarous nations. His fourth observation is drawn from the opposite miracles wrought in different religions, which destroy one another; so that there is no miracle wrought, but what is opposed by an infinite number of others. He then goes on to give an account of some miraculous facts which seem to be well attested, and yet are to

LETTER
IV.

LETTER IV. be rejected as false and incredible. This is the substance of this part of his Essay, which he concludes with an insolent boast as if he thought he had so clearly demonstrated what he undertook, that no man who had not his *understanding* miraculously *subverted* could oppose it. But I apprehend, it will appear upon a distinct examination of what he hath offered, that there is little ground for such confident boasting.

The principal consideration is that which he hath mentioned in the first place, drawn from the want of competent testimony to ascertain the truth of miraculous facts. He affirms, "That
 " there is not to be found in all history any
 " miracle attested by a sufficient number of men,
 " of such unquestionable good sense, education,
 " and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of
 " any design to deceive others; of such credit
 " and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to
 " have a great deal to lose in case of being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time
 " attesting facts perform'd in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world,
 " as to render the detection unavoidable: All
 " which circumstances are requisite to give us a
 " full assurance in the testimony of men*."

Here he supposes, that where these circumstances concur, we may have *full assurance in the testimony of men* concerning the facts they relate,

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 183.

however

however extraordinary and unusual. Let us LETTER therefore examine the conditions and qualifications he insists upon as necessary to render a IV. testimony good and valid, and apply them to the testimony of the witnesses of Christianity, and the extraordinary miraculous facts whereby it was confirmed, especially that of our Saviour's Resurrection.

The first thing he insisteth upon is, that the Miracle should be *attested by a sufficient number of men*. He hath not told us, what number of witnesses he takes to be sufficient in such a case. In some cases very few may be sufficient. Yea, a single evidence may be so circumstanced as to produce a sufficient assurance and conviction in the mind, even concerning a Fact of an extraordinary nature: though where there is a concurrence of many good witnesses, it is undoubtedly an advantage, and tendeth to give farther force to the evidence. And as to this, Christianity hath all the advantages that can reasonably be desired. All the Apostles were the authorized witnesses of the principal facts by which Christianity is attested. So were the seventy Disciples, and the hundred and twenty mentioned *Acts* i. 15, 21, 22. who had been with Jesus from the commencement of his personal ministry to his ascension into heaven: to which might be added many others who had seen his illustrious miracles, as well as heard his excellent instructions. The accounts of these things were published in that very age, and the Facts were represented as

G 2

having

LETTER
IV. having been done, and the Discourses as having been delivered, in the presence of multitudes; so that in effect they appealed to thousands in *Ju-dea, Jerusalem, and Galilee*. It is true, that as to the Resurrection of Christ, this was not a Fact done before all the people†; but there was a number of witnesses to it, sufficient to attest any fact. Christ shewed himself alive after his passion to several persons at different times; whose testimony gave mutual support and force to one another. He shewed himself also to all the Apostles in a body, to several other disciples, and at last to five hundred at once‡. To which it may be added, that all the extraordinary facts and wonderful works wrought by the Apostles and first publishers of Christianity, many of which were of a very public nature, and done in the view of multitudes, came in aid of their testimony.

As to the qualifications of the witnesses, the first thing he requireth is, that “they should be
“ of such unquestioned good sense, education
“ and learning, as to secure us against all delusion
“ in themselves.” The reason why this gentleman here mentioneth *learning* and *education*, as necessary qualifications in witnesses, is evident. It is undoubtedly with a view to exclude the Apostles, who, except *St. Paul*, appear not to have been persons of education and learning. But no

† See this accounted for Vol. I. p. 138, 139, 273, 274.
‡ *Ib.* p. 268.

Court of Judicature, in enquiring into facts, looks upon it to be necessary that the persons giving testimony to the truth of those facts should be persons who had a learned education: It is sufficient, if they appear to be persons of sound sense and honest characters, and that the facts were such as they had an opportunity of being well acquainted with. And thus it was with regard to the first witnesses of Christianity. They were not indeed persons eminent for their learning, knowledge, and experience in the world. If they had been so, this might probably have been regarded as a suspicious circumstance, as if they had themselves laid the scheme, and it was the effect of their own art and contrivance. But they were persons of plain sense, and sound understanding, and perfectly acquainted with the facts they relate. This sufficiently appeareth from their writings, and the accounts they have left us. Their narrations are plain and consistent, delivered in a simple unaffected stile, without any pomp of words, or ostentation of eloquence or literature on the one hand, and on the other without any of the rants of enthusiasm. All is calm, cool, and sedate, the argument of a composed spirit. There is nothing that betrayeth an overheated imagination: nor do they ever fly out into passionate exclamations, even where the subject might seem to warrant it. The facts they relate were of such a nature, and so circumstanced, that they could not themselves be deceived in them, supposing they had their senses, or be made to believe they

LETTER.
IV.

LETTER were done before their eyes, when they were
 IV. not done. This must be acknowledged as to
 the facts done during Christ's personal Ministry. For they were constantly with him in his going out and coming in, and had an opportunity of observing those facts in all their circumstances for a course of years together; and therefore could be as perfectly assured of them, as any man can be of any facts whatsoever, which he himself hears and sees. And as to his resurrection, they were not forward rashly to give credit to it by an enthusiastic heat. They examined it scrupulously, and would not receive it, till compelled by irresistible evidence, and by the testimony of all their senses.

The next thing he insisteth upon is, that
 " the witnesses should be of such undoubted in-
 " tegrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion
 " of any design to deceive others." Apply this to the witnesses of the miraculous Facts whereby Christianity was attested, and it will appear that never were there persons, who were more remote from all reasonable suspicion of fraud, or a design to impose falsehoods upon Mankind. They appeared by their whole temper and conduct to be persons of great probity, and unaffected simplicity, strangers to artful cunning, and the refinements of human policy. It mightily strengthens this, when it is considered, that as the case was circumstanced, they could have no temptation to endeavour to impose these things upon the world if they had not been true, but
 had

had the strongest inducements to the contrary. LETTER
IV.
 They could have no prospect of serving their worldly interest, or answering the ends of ambition, by preaching up a religion contrary to all the prevailing passions and prejudices of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, a principal article of which was salvation through a crucified Jesus. They could scarce have had a reasonable expectation of gaining so much as a single proselyte, to so absurd and foolish a scheme, as it must have been, supposing they had known that all was false, and that Jesus had never risen at all. How could it have been expected in such a case, that they should be able to persuade the *Jews* to receive for their Messiah, one that had been put to an ignominious death by the Heads of their nation, as an impostor and deceiver? Or, that they should persuade the *Gentiles* to acknowledge and worship a crucified *Jew* for their Lord, in preference to their long-adored Deities, and to abandon all their darling Superstitions for a strict and self-denying discipline? The only thing that can be pretended as a possible inducement to them, to endeavour to impose upon mankind, is what this writer afterwards mentions. “What greater temptation, saith he, “than to appear a Missionary, a Prophet, and “Ambassador from heaven? Who would not “encounter many dangers and difficulties, “to attain so sublime a character? Or, if persuaded of it himself, would scruple a pious “fraud in prospect of so holy an end*.” But

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 200.

LETTER there is no room for such a suspicion in the case
 IV. we are now considering. If they had pretended
 a revelation in favour of a Messiah, suited to
 the *Jewish* carnal notions and prejudices, who
 was to erect a mighty worldly dominion, arrayed
 with all the pomp of secular glory and grandeur,
 they might have expected honour and applause
 in being looked upon as his ministers. But what
 honour could they propose from being regarded
 as the disciples and apostles of one that had been
 condemned, and put to a shameful death by
 public authority? To set up as his Ambassadors, and
 pretend to be inspired by his spirit and to be com-
 missioned by him to go through the world,
 preaching up Jesus Christ and him crucified:
 This was in all appearance the readiest way they
 could take to expose themselves to general scorn,
 derision, and reproach: And they must have been
 absolutely out of their senses, to have expected
 that any veneration should be paid to them under
 this character, supposing they had no other proof
 to bring of their crucified Master's being risen,
 and exalted in glory as the universal Lord and
 Saviour, but their own word. Thus it appears
 that they could have no inducements or tempta-
 tions, according to all the principles or motives
 that equally work upon the human mind, to
 attempt to impose this Scheme of Religion, and
 the facts by which it was supported, if they had
 known them to be false: and if they had been
 false, they must have known them to be so. But
 this is not all. They had the strongest possible
 inducements

inducements to the contrary. The Scheme of religion they preached, and which these facts were designed to attest, was directly opposite to their own most rooted prejudices. On the supposition of Christ's not having risen, they must have been sensible that he had deceived them; that the promises and predictions with which he had amused them were false; and that consequently they could have no hopes from him either in this world or in the next. At the same time they could not but foresee, that by pretending he was risen from the dead, and setting him up for the Messiah after he had been crucified, they should incur the indignation of the body of their own nation, and the hatred and contempt of those in chief authority among them. They could not possibly expect any thing but what they met with, persecutions, reproaches, shame and sufferings both from *Jews* and *Gentiles*. Their exposing themselves to these things may be accounted for, if they were persuaded that what they witnessed was really true; though even in that case it required great virtue and constancy, and divine supports. But that they should in manifest opposition to their own religious prejudices and worldly interests, without the least prospect of any thing to be gained by it here or hereafter, persist to the very death in attesting a falshood known by themselves to be so; and that they should, for the sake of one who they knew had deceived them, expose themselves to the greatest evils and sufferings to which all men

LETTER
IV.
}

LETTER ^{IV.} men have naturally the strongest aversion, is a supposition that cannot be admitted with the least appearance of reason, as being absolutely subversive of all the principles and passions of human nature. Our author ought to acknowledge the force of this reasoning, since he taketh pains throughout his whole Essay on Liberty and Necessity, to shew that we may in many cases argue as surely and strongly, from the power and influence of motives on the human mind, as from the influence of physical causes; and that there is as great a certainty, and as necessary a connexion in what are called moral causes as in physical. And he expressly declareth, that “we cannot make use of a more convincing argument than to prove, that the actions ascribed to any person are contrary to the course of nature, and that no human motives in such circumstances, could ever induce them to such a conduct*.”

This writer farther requireth, that “the witnesses should be of such Credit and Reputation in the eyes of Mankind as to have a great deal to lose in case of being detected in any falshood.” If the meaning be, that they must be persons distinguished by their rank and situation in the world, and of great reputation for knowledge, and for the eminency of their station and figure in life; this in the case here referred to would instead of strengthening have greatly weakened the force of their testimony.

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 135,

It might have been said with some shew of plausibility, that such persons by their knowledge and abilities, their reputation and interest, might have it in their power to countenance and propagate an imposture among the people, and give it some credit in the world. If the facts recorded in the gospel, the miracles and resurrection of Jesus Christ, had been patronized and attested by the Chief Priests and Rulers of the *Jewish* Nation, it would undoubtedly have been pretended that they had political designs in view, and that considering their authority and influence they might more easily impose those things upon the multitude. On this view of things the evidence for those important facts would have been far less convincing than now it is. And therefore the Divine wisdom hath ordered it far better, in appointing that the first witnesses of the Gospel were not the worldly *wise, mighty, or noble*, but persons of mean condition, and yet of honest characters, without power, authority, or interest. And whereas this writer urgeth, that the witnesses ought to be of *such reputation as to have a great deal to lose in case of being detected in a falsehood*, it ought to be considered, that a man of true probity, though in a low condition, may be as unwilling to be branded as a cheat and an impostor, and as desirous to preserve his good name, which may be almost all he has to value himself upon, as persons of greater figure and eminence in the world, who may more easily find means to support themselves, and to evade detection and punishment.

LETTER

IV.

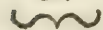
nishment. The Apostles indeed rejoiced that they were counted *worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ*, Acts. v. 41. But this was not owing to their being insensible to shame, but to the testimony of a good conscience, and to the full persuasion they had of Christ's divine Mission, and the divinity of the Religion they preached in his name. This particularly was the principle upon which St. *Paul* acted, who was a man of reputation among the *Jews*, and would never have made a sacrifice of this, and of all his worldly interests and expectations, to join himself to a despised persecuted party, and against whom he himself had conceived the strongest prejudices, if he had not been brought over by an evidence which he was not able to resist, to the acknowledgement of the Christian faith, and of the extraordinary facts on which it was established.

The last thing he insisteth upon is, that the facts attested by the witnesses should be “performed in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the Detection unavoidable.” This may be applied with the greatest propriety to the extraordinary and miraculous Facts by which Christianity was attested. Justly doth St. *Paul* appeal to king *Agrippa* in the admirable apology he made before him and the Roman Governor *Festus*, and which was delivered before a numerous and august assembly of *Jews* and *Romans*, that *none of these things were hidden from him: for, saith he,*
this

this thing was not done in a corner. Act. xxvi. 26. LETTER
 Christ's whole personal Ministry, and the wonderful works he wrought, were transacted not in a private and secret, but in the most open and public manner possible, in places of the greatest concourse, and before multitudes of people assembled from all parts. The same may be said of many of the miracles wrought by the apostles in the name and by the power of a risen Jesus. And particularly never was there any event of a more public nature than the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. The first publishers of Christianity preached the religion of Jesus, and performed miracles in confirmation of it, not merely in small villages, or obscure parts of the country, but in populous cities, in those parts of the world that were most celebrated for the liberal arts, learning, and politeness. They published that religion, and the wonderful Facts by which it was supported, throughout the lesser *Asia, Greece, Italy*; in the cities of *Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Philippi, Athens*, and *Rome* itself. If therefore their pretences had been false, they could scarce have possibly escaped a detection. Especially considering that they were every where under the eye of watchful Adversaries, unbelieving *Jews* as well as Heathens, who would not have failed to detect and expose the imposture, if there had been any. As to what the author afterwards alledgeth, that "in the infancy of
 " new religions the wise and learned commonly esteem

LETTER

IV.



“ esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve
 “ their attention and regard. And when after-
 “ wards they would willingly detect the cheat, in
 “ order to undeceive the deluded multitude, the
 “ season is now gone, and the Records and Wit-
 “ nesses, who might clear up the matter, are
 “ perished beyond recovery*.” This pretence
 hath no place in the case we are now considering
 with regard to Christianity. That religion met
 with the greatest opposition even in its infancy.
 Persons of principal authority in the nation where
 it first arose, bent their attention and employed
 their power to suppress it. And in all the places
 where it was afterwards propagated, there were
 unbelieving *Jews*, who used their utmost efforts
 to stir up the Heathens against it, who of them-
 selves were strongly inclined by their own preju-
 dices to oppose it: and this at the very time
 when if the facts had been false, it would have
 been the easiest thing in the world, to have de-
 tected the falshood; which in that case must
 have been known to thousands; since many of
 the facts appealed to were of a very public nature.

Thus I have considered the conditions and
 qualifications he insisteth upon as necessary to
 give us a *full assurance in the testimony of men*
 with regard to miracles; and have shewn, that
 all the conditions that can be reasonably desired
 concur with the highest degree of evidence in
 the Testimony given by the apostles and first
 witnesses of Christianity, to the extraordinary

● Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 202.

facts whereby its divine authority was established. LETTER
IV.
 Their Testimony had some advantages which no other Testimony ever had. St. *Luke* observes, that *with great power gave the apostles witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus*, Acts. iv. 33. The Testimony they gave was accompanied with a Divine power. The force of their Testimony did not depend merely on their own veracity, but may be said to have been confirmed by the attestation of God himself. It is with the utmost propriety therefore that the sacred writer of the epistle to the *Hebrews* representeth God as *bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will*, Hebr. ii. 4. And it is incontestibly true in fact, that so strong and convincing was the evidence, that great numbers both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* were brought over in that very age to the faith of a crucified and risen Saviour. Nor was this the effect of a too forward credulity, since it was in direct opposition to their prejudices, passions and worldly interests. The Principles and Inducements, which usually lead men to form wrong and partial judgments, lay wholly on the other side, and instead of being favourable to Christianity tended rather to determine men to disbelieve and reject it. So that it may be justly said, that the Propagation of that Scheme of religion which is held forth in the Gospel had something in it so wonderful, taking in all the circumstances of the case, that it affordeth a manifest and most convincing

LETTER convincing proof of the truth of the extraordinary
IV. Facts upon which it was founded.

I now proceed to make some observations upon the other Considerations this Gentleman offers in this second Part of his Essay; and which indeed can at best pass, for no more than Presumptions; and only shew, that the Testimony given to Miracles is not rashly to be admitted, and that great care and caution is necessary in judging of them, which will be easily allowed.

The second Consideration, and upon which he seemeth to lay a great stress is this. That “we
“ may observe in human nature a Principle,
“ which, if strictly examined, will be found to
“ diminish extremely the assurance we might
“ have from human Testimony, in any kind of
“ Prodigy.” He says, “That though for the
“ most part we readily reject any Fact that is
“ unusual and incredible in an ordinary degree,
“ yet when any thing is affirmed utterly absurd
“ and miraculous, the mind rather more readily
“ admits such a Fact, upon account of that very
“ circumstance, which ought to destroy all its
“ authority. The passion of *Surprise* and *Wonder*
“ arising from Miracles, being an agreeable
“ Emotion, gives a sensible tendency towards
“ the belief of those Events from which it is de-
“ rived.—But if the Spirit of Religion join
“ itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of
“ common Sense; and human Testimony in these
“ circumstances loses all pretensions to autho-
“ rity

" rity *". And again he observes, that " should LETTER
IV.
 " a miracle be ascribed to any new system of re-
 " ligion, men in all ages have been so much
 " imposed on by the ridiculous stories of this
 " kind, that this very circumstance will be a
 " full proof of a cheat, and sufficient with all
 " men of sense, not only to make them reject
 " the fact, but even reject it without farther
 " examination." And he repeats it again, that
 it should " make us form a general resolution
 " never to lend any attention to it, with what-
 " ever specious pretext it may be covered †."

He here undertakes to answer for all *men of sense*,
 that they will reject all miracles produced in proof
 of religion without farther examination: be-
 cause men in all ages have been much imposed
 on by ridiculous stories of this kind. But this
 certainly is the language, not of reason and good
 sense, which will dispose a man fairly to examine,
 but of the most obstinate prepossession and pre-
 judice. No kinds of historical facts, whether of
 an ordinary or extraordinary nature, can be men-
 tioned, in which men have not been frequently
 imposed upon. But this is no just reason for
 rejecting such facts at once without examination:
 and the man that would do so, instead of proving
 his superior good sense, would only render him-
 self ridiculous. That there have been many
 false miracles will be readily acknowledged; but
 this doth not prove that there never have been
 any true ones. It ought indeed to make us very

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 184, 185. † *Ib.* p. 204, 205.

LETTER IV. cautious, and to examine miracles carefully before we receive them; but is no reason at all, or a very absurd one, for rejecting them all at once without examination and inquiry. Thus to reject them can only be justified upon this principle, that it is not possible there should be a true miracle wrought in favour of any system of religion. But by what medium will he undertake to prove this? He seems expressly to admit, that in other cases, "there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human Testimony*." This concession is not very consistent with what he had laboured in the first part of his essay to shew, with regard to all miracles in general, *viz.* that they are incapable of being proved by any testimony. But now, provided miracles be not produced in proof of religion, he seems willing to allow, that they may *possibly admit of proof from human testimony.* The only case therefore in which they are never to be believed, is when they are pretended to be wrought in favour of religion. But in this he seems to have both the reason of the thing, and the general sense of mankind against him. It is certainly more reasonable to believe a miracle, when a valuable end can be assigned for it, than to believe it when we cannot discern any important end to be answered by it at all. And one of the most valuable ends for which a miracle can be supposed to be wrought seems to be

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 203.

this, to give an attestation to the divine mission of persons sent to instruct mankind in religious truths of great importance, and to lead them in the way of salvation. Our author seems sometimes to lay a mighty stress on the general opinion and common *sentiments* of mankind*. And there are few notions, which, by his own acknowledgement, have more generally obtained in all nations and ages, than this, that there have been miracles actually wrought on some occasions, especially in matters of religion, and that they are to be regarded as proofs of a divine interposition. This is a principle which seems to be conformable to the natural sense of the human mind.

The observation he makes concerning the agreeable Emotion produced by the passion of wonder and surprize, and the strong propensity there is in mankind to the extraordinary and the marvellous, proves nothing against this principle. The passion of wonder and surprize was certainly not given us in vain, but for very wise purposes, and it may be presumed, that this passion, as well as others, may be rightly exercised upon proper objects. But I cannot agree with this gentleman, that men are naturally disposed and inclined to believe a thing the rather for its being *utterly absurd and miraculous*, especially in matters of religion. They may, indeed, and often do believe absurdities; but they never believe a thing merely because it is absurd, but be-

* Hume's Essays, Moral and Political, p. 307.

LETTER VI. cause, taking all considerations together, they do not look upon it to be absurd. It may be observed by the way, that this writer here makes *absurd* and *miraculous* to be terms of the same signification, whereas they are very different ideas. A miracle, when supposed to be wrought by a power adequate to the effect, and for excellent ends, is indeed wonderful, but has no absurdity in it at all. It is true, there have often been very absurd things recommended to popular belief under the notion of miracles. And such pretended miracles have been received without much examination, when wrought in favour of the established superstition. But even real miracles are received with difficulty, when they are wrought in opposition to it; and where the influence of the priesthood, the prejudices of the vulgar, and the authority of the magistrate, are on the other side: Which was the case of Christianity at its first appearance. Considering the nature of that religion, how contrary it was to the prevailing notions and prejudices both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the strictness of the morals it prescribed, the scheme of salvation through a crucified Saviour which it proposed, the meanness of the instruments by which it was propagated, and the numberless difficulties it had to encounter with; the miracles wrought in attestation to it could not have met with a favourable reception in the world, if there had not been the most convincing evidence of their being really wrought. The strangeness of the facts,
instead

instead of producing belief, would rather have turned to its disadvantage, and could scarce have failed being detected in such circumstances, if they had been false. LETTER
IV.

His third observation is, that it “ forms a
“ very strong presumption against all superna-
“ tural relations, that they are always found
“ chiefly to abound among ignorant and bar-
“ barous nations; or if a civilized people have
“ ever given admission to any of them, they
“ have received them from ignorant and bar-
“ barous ancestors *.” But no presumption
can be drawn from this to the prejudice of
Christianity, which did not make its first ap-
pearance in an ignorant and barbarous age, but
at a time when the world was greatly civilized,
and in nations where arts and learning had made
a very great progress. And it must be considered,
that it had not only their inveterate prejudices,
their darling passions, and inclinations, but their
pretended miracles to encounter with; extra-
ordinary facts received from their ancestors,
who *transmitted them*, as he expresseth it, *with*
that inviolable Sanction and Authority, which
always attends antient and received opinions.
How strong and cogent therefore must the force
of the evidence in behalf of the Christian reli-
gion, and the extraordinary miraculous facts
designed to support it, have been, which in the
hands of such mean instruments, could make so
great a progress in a civilized and enlightened
age, and proved too hard for the religion of the

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 136, 137.

LETTER
IV.

empire; which besides its being interwoven with the civil establishment, had the prescription of many ages to plead, and was supported by pretended miracles, prodigies and oracles? Mr. *Hume* is pleased to take notice on this occasion of the management of that cunning impostor *Alexander* *. But though the better to carry on the cheat, he had laid the scene among the barbarous *Paphlagonians*, who were reckoned among the most stupid and ignorant of the human race; and not only put in practice all the arts of imposture (though it doth not appear that he pretended to work miracles among the people, or put the proof of his authority upon them) but had procured a powerful interest among the great to support him, he and his impostures soon sunk into oblivion, and so undoubtedly would Christianity too have done, if its extraordinary facts had no better foundation in truth and fact than his pretensions had.

“ I may add (saith he) as a fourth reason,
 “ which diminishes the authority of prodigies;
 “ that there is no testimony for any, even those
 “ which have not been expressly detected, that
 “ is not opposed by an infinite number of
 “ witnesses; so that not only the miracle de-
 “ stroys the credit of the testimony, but even
 “ the Testimony destroys itself.” He goes on
 to observe, that “ in matters of religion what-
 “ ever is different is contrary. That it is im-
 “ possible that all these different religions should

* *Hume's Philosophical Essays*; p. 188, 189.


“ be established on a solid foundation: That
 “ every miracle pretended to have been wrought
 “ in any of these religions, as it is designed to
 “ establish that particular system, has the same
 “ force to overthrow every other system; and
 “ consequently to destroy the credit of those
 “ miracles on which that system was established.
 “ So that all the prodigies of different religions
 “ are to be regarded as contrary facts, and the
 “ evidences of those prodigies as opposite to
 “ one another*.” This writer is here pleased
 to confound *prodigies* and *miracles*, which
 ought to be distinguished. Many things that
 have passed under the notion of prodigies, are
 very far from being miracles in the strict and
 proper sense, in which we are now considering
 them. And if we speak of miracles properly so
 called, the supposition he here goes upon, *viz.*
 that all religions have been founded upon mira-
 cles, and have put the proof of their authority
 upon them, is manifestly false. It is well known,
 that *Mahomet* did not pretend to establish his
 religion by miracles, nor indeed can it be proved
 that any systems of religion had any tolerable
 pretensions of being originally founded upon
 miracles, but the *Jewish* and the *Christian*; and
 these, though in some respects *different*, are not
contrary, but mutually support each other; the
 former being inductive and preparatory to
 the latter. But if his supposition should be ad-
 mitted, that all religions in the world have been

LETTER
IV.

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 190, 191.

LETTER ^{IV.} founded upon the credit of miracles, it is hard to comprehend the force of his reasoning. By what logic doth it follow, that because miracles have been believed by mankind in all ages and nations to have been wrought in proof of religion, therefore miracles were never really wrought at all in proof of religion, nor are they ever to be believed in any single instance? With the same force it may be argued that because there have been and are many opposite schemes of religion in the world, therefore their being opposite to one another proves that they are all false, and that there is no such thing as true religion in the world at all. But let us suppose never so great a number of falsehoods opposed to truth, that opposition of falsehood to truth, doth not make truth to be the less true, or destroy the certainty and evidence of it. Supposing the religions to be opposite, and that miracles are said to be wrought in attestation to those opposite religions, it may indeed be fairly concluded that they cannot be all true, but not, that none of them is so. Our author himself seems to be apprehensive that this might be looked upon as a fallacious way of reasoning. “ This argument (saith he) may appear very subtle and refined; but is not in reality different from the reasoning of a Judge, who supposes that the credit of two witnesses, maintaining a crime against any one is destroyed by the testimony of two others, who affirm him to have been two hundred leagues distant

“distant at the same instant when the crime is
 “said to have been committed*.” This gen-
 tleman has here given us a most extraordinary
 specimen, how well qualified he would be to
 determine causes, if he sat in a court of Judica-
 ture. If there came several witnesses before
 him, and their testimony was opposite to one
 another, he would without farther examination
 reject them all at once, and make their opposition
 to one another to be alone a proof that they were
 all false, and none of them to be depended upon.
 But it hath been hitherto thought reasonable,
 when testimonies are opposite, to weigh and
 compare those testimonies, in order to form a
 proper judgment concerning them. In the case
 of *Alibis*, which is the case the author here
 puts, the testimonies do not always destroy one
 another. A just and impartial Judge will not
 immediately reject the testimonies on both sides
 without examination, because they contradict
 one another, which is the method our author
 seems here to recommend as reasonable, but will
 carefully compare them, that he may find out on
 which side the truth lies, and which of the testimo-
 nies is most to be credited, and will give his judg-
 ment accordingly. This certainly is the course
 which right reason prescribeth in all cases where
 there is an opposition of testimony, and which
 it is to be presumed this gentleman himself would
 recommend in every case, but where the cause of

LETTER
 IV.


* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 192.

LETTER religion is concerned. For here, notwithstanding all his pretensions to freedom of thinking, his prejudices are so strong, that he is for proceeding by different weights and measures from what he and all mankind would judge reasonable in every other instance. He hath shewed himself so little qualified to judge impartially in matters of this nature, that I believe *men of sense*, to use his own phrase, will lay very little stress on any judgment he shall think fit to pronounce in this cause.

The only part of Mr. *Hume's* Essay on Miracles, which now remaineth to be considered, is that which relateth to some particular accounts of miraculous facts, which he would have us believe are as well or better attested, than those recorded in the Gospels, and yet are to be rejected as false and incredible. The first instance he mentioneth is that of the Emperor *Vespasian's* curing a blind and a lame man at *Alexandria*, and which he affirms is one of the best-attested miracles in all profane History. This has been urged by almost every Deistical writer who hath treated of Miracles: And how little it is to the purpose in the present controversy hath been often shewn. Not to repeat what Mr. *Adams* hath well urged concerning it, it may be sufficient to observe, that it appeareth from the accounts given us by the historians who mention it *, that the design of these miracles was to give weight to the authority of *Vespasian*, newly made Emperor

* Tacit. Hist. lib. 4. cap. 8. Sueton. in Vespas. cap. 8.

by the great men and the army, and to make it believed that that his elevation to the imperial throne was approved by the gods. I believe every reasonable man will be of opinion, that in any case of this kind there is great ground to suspect artifice and management. And who would be so presumptuous as to make too narrow a scrutiny into the truth of miracles, in which the interests of the Great, and the authority of a mighty Emperor, were so nearly concerned. And if, as this writer observes from *Tacitus*, some who were present continued to relate these facts, even after *Vespasian* and his family were no longer in possession of the empire; it doth not appear, that the persons referred to were such as had been in the secret of the management, which probably lay in few hands; or if they were, it is not to be wonder'd at that they should afterwards be unwilling to own the part they had in this affair; especially since no methods were made use of to oblige them to discover the fraud.

The next instance he produceth is the miracle pretended to have been wrought at *Saragossa*, and mentioned by Cardinal *De Retz*, who by Mr. *Hume's* own account did not believe it. But certainly a man must have his head very oddly turned to attempt to draw a parallel between the miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles, and miracles pretended to have been wrought in a country where the Inquisition is established, where the influence and interests of the Priests, the superstitions and prejudices of the People, and the

LETTER
IV.

LETTER
IV.

the authority of the civil Magistrate, are all combined to support the credit of those miracles, and where it would be extremely dangerous to make a strict enquiry into the truth of them: and even the expressing the least doubt concerning them might expose a man to the most terrible of all evils and sufferings.

But that which Mr. *Hume* seems to lay the greatest stress upon, and on which he enlarges for some pages together, is, the miracles reported to have been wrought at the tomb of the *Abbé de Paris*. Having observed that in the *Recueil des Miracles de l'Abbé de Paris*, there is a parallel run between the miracles of our Saviour, and those of the Abbé, he pronounces, that “ if the inspired writers were
“ to be considered merely as human testimony,
“ the *French* author is very moderate in his
“ comparison, since he might with some appearance of reason pretend, that the *Jansenist*
“ miracles much surpass the others in credit and
“ authority *.”

This has been of late a favourite topic with the Deists. Great triumphs have been raised upon it, as if it were alone sufficient to destroy the credit of the miraculous facts recorded in the New Testament. I shall therefore make some observations upon it, though in doing so I shall be obliged to take notice of several things which Mr. *Adams* hath already observed in his judicious reflections upon this subject, in his answer

* *Hume's Philosophical Essays*, p. 196.

to Mr. *Hume's* Essay on Miracles, from page 65, to page 78. LETTER
IV.

The account Mr. *Hume* pretends to give of this whole affair is very unfair and disingenuous, and is absolutely unworthy of any man that makes pretensions to a free and impartial enquiry.

He positively asserts, that the miraculous facts were so strongly proved, that the Molinists or Jesuits were never able distinctly to refute or detect them: And that they could not deny the truth of the facts, but ascribed them to witchcraft and the devil. And yet certain it is, that the Jesuits or Molinists did deny many of the facts to be true as the *Jansenists* related them; that they asserted them to be false, and plainly proved several of them to be so. Particularly the Archbishop of *Sens* distinctly insisted upon twenty-two of those pretended miraculous facts, all which he charged as owing to falshood and imposture.

He farther observes, that twenty-two of the Curez or Rectors of *Paris* pressed the Archbishop of *Paris* to examine those miracles, and asserted them to be known to the whole world. But he knew, or might have known, that some of those very miracles which those gentlemen desired might be particularly inquired into, and which they represented as undeniably true and certain, were afterwards examined, and the perjury of the principal witnesses plainly detected*.

* See Mr. Des Voeux's Critique General, p. 242, 243.

LETTER IV. And the Archbishop, who, he tells us, wisely forbore an inquiry, caused a public judicial inquest to be made, as Mr. *Adams* observes, and in an ordonnance of *November 8, 1735*, published the most convincing proofs, that the miracles so strongly vouched by the *Curez*, were forged and counterfeited*.

Mr. *Hume* is pleased to observe, that “the Molinist party tried to discredit those miracles in one instance, that of *Mademoiselle le Franc*, but were not able to do it.” Where he speaks, as if this were the single instance in which they tried to discredit those miracles, which is far from being true. This indeed was taken particular notice of, because it was the first history of a miraculous Fact which the *Jansenists* thought fit to publish, with a pompous dissertation prefixed. It was cried up as of such unquestionable truth, that it could not be denied without doubting of the most certain facts. And yet the story was proved to be false in the most material circumstances by forty witnesses judicially examined upon oath. It was plainly proved, that she was considerably better of her maladies before she went to the tomb at all: That she was no stronger when she returned from the tomb, than she was when she went to it; and that she still stood in need of remedies afterwards. Mr. *Hume* indeed takes upon him to declare, that the proceedings were the most irregular in the world, particularly inciting but a few of the *Jan-*

* *Adams's Essay*, p. 71.

senist witnesses, whom they tampered with. LETTER
IV.
And then he adds, "Besides they were soon overwhelmed with a cloud of new witnesses, an hundred and twenty in number, who gave oath for the miracles." He doth not say, they all gave oath for this particular miracle, but for the miracles. And indeed most of those testimonies were very little to the purpose, and seemed to be designed rather for parade and show than for proof. And nothing turned more to the disadvantage of the *Jansenists*, than their endeavouring still to maintain the credit of this miracle, after the falshood of it had been so evidently detected. The more witnesses they endeavoured to produce for this, the more they rendered themselves suspected in all the rest. They alleged some want of formality in the proceedings, but were never able to disprove the principal circumstances of the facts alledged on the other side, and which were absolutely inconsistent with the truth and reality of the miracle *.

Mr. *Hume* refers his reader to the *Recueil des Miracles de l'Abbé Paris* in three volumes: but especially to the famous book of Mr. *de Montgeron*, a counsellor or judge of the parliament of *Paris*, and which was dedicated to the *French King*. But if he had read on both sides, or had thought fit to lay the matter fairly before his reader, he might have informed him that these books have

* This whole matter is set in a clear light in Mr. Des Voeux's *Dissertat. sur les miracles*, &c. p. 46. 49. and in his *Critique Generale*, p. 204. 231, 232.

LETTER

IV.

been solidly answered by Mr. *Des Voeux*, a very ingenious and judicious author, who had himself been bred up among the *Jansenists*, and was at *Paris* part of the time that this scene was carrying on. See his *Lettres sur les Miracles*, published in 1735, and his *Critique Generale du livre de Mr. de Montgeron*, in 1741. See also what relates to this subject in the 19th and 20th *Tomes* of the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*.

There never was perhaps a book written with a greater air of assurance and confidence, than that of Mr. *de Montgeron*. He intitles it, *The Truth of the Miracles wrought by the intercession of M. de Paris and other Appellants, demonstrated against M. the Archbishop of Sens*. It was natural therefore to expect, that he would have attempted to justify all those miracles which that prelate had attacked. But of twenty-two which are distinctly insisted upon by the Archbishop, there are seventeen which Mr. *de Montgeron* does not meddle with. He hath passed by those of them against which the strongest charges of falsehood and imposture lay. Five of the miracles attacked by the Archbishop, he takes pains to justify, to which he has added four more which that Prelate had not distinctly considered. Mr. *Des Voeux*, who has examined this work of Mr. *de Montgeron* with great care and judgment, hath plainly shewn that there are every-where to be discovered in it marks of the strongest prepossession*. Carried away by the power of his pre-


* The character of Mr. *de Montgeron* is well represented by Mr. *Adams* in his answer to *Hume*, p. 74, 75.

judices, and by his affection to the *Jansenist* cause to which he was greatly attached, he has in several instances disguised and misrepresented facts in a manner which cannot be excused or vindicated. The last mentioned author has charged him with faults not merely of inadvertency but with direct falsifications designed to impose upon the public. See the sixth letter of his *Critique Generale*, page 208, et seq. Mr. *Hume* has taken care not to give his reader the least hint of any thing of this nature.

The remarks which have been now made may help us to judge of Mr. *Hume's* conduct in his management of this subject.

I shall now proceed to make some observations upon the remarkable differences there are between the miracles recorded in the gospels, and those ascribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, by considering which it will appear that no argument can be justly drawn from the latter to discredit the former, or to invalidate the proof produced for them.

I. One observation of no small weight is this. At the time when the miracles of the Abbé *de Paris* first appeared, there was a strong and numerous party in *France*, and which was under the conduct of very able and learned men, who were strongly prepossessed in favour of that cause which those miracles seemed to be intended to support. And it might naturally be expected, that these would use all their interests and influ-

LETTER IV.  for maintaining and spreading the credit of them among the people. And so it actually happened. The first rumours of these miracles were eagerly laid hold on; and they were cried up as real and certain miracles, and as giving a clear decision of Heaven on the side of the appellants, even before there was any regular proof so much as pretended to be given for them*. To which it may be added, that the beginning of this whole affair was at a very promising conjuncture, viz. when the Cardinal *de Noailles* was archbishop of *Paris*; who, whatever may be said of his capacity and integrity, which Mr. *Hume* highly extols, was well known to be greatly inclined to favour the cause of the appellants. It was therefore a situation of things very favourable to the credit of those miracles, that they first appeared under his administration, and were tried before his officials. And though the succeeding archbishop was no friend to the *Jansenists*, yet when once the credit of those miracles was in some measure established, and they had got the popular vogue on their side, the affair was more easily carried on. But at the first appearance of Christianity, the circumstances of things were entirely different. There were indeed parties among the *Jews*, the most powerful of which were the *Pharisees* and the *Saducees*, besides the priests and rulers of the *Jews*, and the Sanhedrim or great council of the nation. But not one of these afforded the least counte-

* See Crit. Gen. Lettre vi.

nance to the first witnesses and publishers of the Christian religion. Our Lord, far from addicting himself to any party, freely declared against what was amiss in every one of them. He opposed the distinguishing tenets of the *Saducees*, the traditions, superstitions, and hypocrisy of the *Pharisees*, and the prejudices of the vulgar. Christianity proceeded upon a principle directly contrary to that in which all parties among the *Jews* were agreed, *viz.* upon the doctrine of a spiritual kingdom, and a suffering Messiah. And accordingly all the different sects and parties, all the powers civil and ecclesiastical, united their interests and endeavours to oppose and suppress it. Whatever suspicion therefore might be entertained with regard to the miracles said to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*, which had a strong party from the beginning prepared to receive and support them; no such suspicion can reasonably be admitted as to the truth and reality of the extraordinary facts whereby Christianity was attested, which, as the case was circumstanced, could scarce possibly have made their way in the manner they did, or have escaped detection, if they had not been true.

II. Another consideration, which shews a remarkable difference between the miracles recorded to have been wrought by our Saviour and his apostles, and those ascribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, is this: That the former carry plain characters of a divine interposition, and a supernatural power, and the latter, even taking their own

LETTER account of them, do not appear to be evidently
 IV. miraculous, they may be accounted for without
 supposing any thing properly supernatural in the
 case. Our Lord Jesus Christ not only healed all
 manner of diseases, but he raised the dead. He
 commanded the winds and the seas, and they
 obeyed him: He searched the hearts, and knew
 the thoughts of men: He gave many express and
 circumstantial predictions of future contingencies,
 both relating to his own sufferings and death,
 and to his consequent resurrection and exaltation,
 and relating to the calamities that should come
 upon the *Jews*, the destruction of *Jerusalem*
 and the temple, and the wonderful propagation
 and establishment of his church and kingdom in
 the world, which it was impossible for any man,
 judging by the rules of human probability, to
 foresee. He not only performed the most
 wonderful works himself, but he imparted the
 same miraculous powers to his disciples, and
 poured forth upon them the extraordinary gifts
 of the Holy Ghost, as he had promised and fore-
 told; gifts of the most admirable nature, which
 were never parallel'd before nor since, and which
 were peculiarly fitted for spreading and propa-
 gating the Christian religion. With regard to these
 and other things which might be mentioned, no
 man has ever pretended to draw a comparison
 between the miracles ascribed to the Abbé *de Paris*,
 and those of our Saviour. And accordingly one
 of the most zealous and able advocates for the
 former, M. *Le Gros* expressly acknowledgeth,
 that

that there is *an infinite difference between them*,^{LETTER}
 and declares that he *will never forget that difference*.^{IV.} The only instance in which a parallel is pretended to be drawn, is with regard to miraculous cures, which alone considered are the most uncertain and equivocal of all miracles. Diseases have often been surprizingly cured without any thing that can be properly called miraculous in the case. Wonderful has been the effect of medicines administred in certain circumstances: And some maladies, after having long resisted all the art and power of remedies, have gone off of themselves by the force of nature, or by some surprizing and unexpected turn, in a manner that cannot be distinctly explained; yet it may be observed, that there were several circumstances attending the miraculous cures wrought by our Saviour and his apostles, which plainly shewed them to be divine. The cures were wrought in an instant by a commanding word. The blind, the lame, those that laboured under the most obstinate and inveterate diseases found themselves immediately restored at once with an Almighty facility. If there had been only a few instances of this kind, it might possibly have been attributed to some odd accident, or hidden cause, which could not be accounted for. But the instances of such complete and instantaneous cures wrought by our Saviour were very numerous. They extended to all manner of diseases, and to all persons without exception who applied to him. Yea, he cured

I 3

some

LETTER IV. some that did not apply to him, who did not know him, or who were his enemies, and had no expectation of a cure, in which cases it could not be pretended that imagination had any share. In all these respects there was a remarkable difference between the miraculous cures wrought by our Saviour, and those pretended to have been wrought at the tomb of the *Abbé de Paris*. Several of the most boasted cures, and which were pretended to have been sudden and perfected at once, appear from their own accounts to have been carried on by slow degrees, and therefore might have been brought about in a natural way. Some of these cures were days, weeks, and even months before they were perfected. One nine days devotion followed another, and they were suffered to languish and continue praying and supplicating for a considerable time together; and if the cure happened, and the distemper came to a crisis during the course of their long attendance, and whilst they were continuing their devotions, this passed for a miraculous cure, though it might well be done without any miracle at all. Especially as several of those persons continued to be taking remedies, even whilst they were attending at the tomb. It is manifest from the relations published by themselves, that with regard to several of those who were pretended to be miraculously cured, their maladies had already begun to abate, and they had found considerable ease and relief in a natural way before they came to the tomb at all. And some of

of them seem by the force of their imagination to have believed themselves cured, when they were not so, or to have taken a temporary relief for an absolute cure. Several of the cures, the accounts of which were published with great pomp, could not with any propriety be said to have been perfected at all; since the persons said to have been cured still continued infirm, and had returns of their former disorders. This can scarce be supposed, if the cures had been really miraculous, and owing to an extraordinary exertion of the power of God, who would not have left his own work imperfect. See all these things fully proved by many instances in *M. des Voeux's* letters *sur les Miracles*; particularly in the fifth of those letters.

To all which it may be added, that of the vast numbers who came to the tomb to be cured, and who had recourse to the Abbé's intercession, there were but few on whom the cures were wrought, in comparison of those who found no benefit at all, though they applied to him with the utmost devotion, and continued to do so for a long time together. And indeed considering how many there were that applied for help and cure, and how much they were prepossessed with the notions countenanced in the *Romish* church, of the power of departed Saints, of the prevalency of their intercession, and the efficacy of their relics, and to what a height their imagination was raised by their prejudices in favour of the appellants, by the high

LETTER ^{IV.} opinion they had of the Abbé's extraordinary sanctity, by the rumours of miracles daily spread and propagated, and by the vast crouds which attended at the tomb, it would have been really a wonder, if amongst the multitude that came for cure, there had not been several who found themselves greatly relieved. The advocates for the miracles mightily extol the extraordinary faith and confidence the sick persons had in the intercession of the blessed Deacon, as they call him. And the force of their imagination when carried to so extraordinary a pitch, might in some particular cases produce great effects. Many wonderful instances to this purpose have been observed and recorded by the ablest physicians, by which it appears what a mighty influence imagination, accompanied with strong passions, hath often had upon human bodies, especially in the cure of diseases. It hath often done more in a short time this way, than a long course of medicines have been able to accomplish. It is not therefore to be much wondered at, that as the case was circumstanced, amidst such a multitude of persons some surprizing cures were wrought. But it could not be expected that the effect would be constant and uniform. If it answered in some instances, it would fail in many more. And accordingly so it was with regard to these pretended miraculous cures. And if this had been the case in the extraordinary cures wrought by our Saviour, there would have been ground of suspicion, that what some have

have alleged might possibly have been true, that his miracles owed their force, not to any supernatural energy, but to the power of imagination. But taking these miracles as they are recorded in the gospels, it is manifest that there can be no just ground for such a pretence. They exhibit evident proofs of a divine interposition, which cannot be said of these reported to have been wrought at the Abbé's tomb. *M. de Montgeron*, in his book dedicated to the King, published an account of eight or nine cures. And it is to be supposed, that he fixed upon those which, he thought, had the appearance of being most signally miraculous. And yet the very first of these miracles, *viz.* that affirmed to have been wrought upon *Don Alphonso de Palacio*, appeareth plainly by taking the whole of the relation, as *M. Montgeron* himself hath given it, to have had nothing in it properly miraculous, as *Mr. Adams* hath clearly shewn*. And with regard both to that and the other eight miracles so pompously displayed by *M. de Montgeron*, *M. Des Voeux* has very ingeniously and judiciously, after a distinct examination of each of them, made it appear that they might have been wrought without supposing any miraculous or supernatural interposition at all. See the last letter of his *Critique Generale*.

III. Another consideration, which shews the great difference there is between the miracles wrought at the first establishment of Christianity,


* *Adams's Essay*, in answer to *Hume*, p. 76, 77.

and

LETTER and those said to have been wrought at the tomb
 IV. of the Abbé *de Paris*, and that no argument can
 reasonably be brought from the latter to the prejudice of the former, is taken from the many suspicious circumstances attending the latter, from which the former were entirely free. Christ's miracles were wrought, in a grave and decent, in a great but simple manner, becoming one sent of God, without any absurd or ridiculous ceremonies, or superstitious observances. But the miracles of the Abbé *de Paris* were attended with circumstances that had all the marks of superstition, and which seemed designed and fitted to strike the imagination. The earth of his tomb was often made use of, or the waters of the well of his house. The nine days devotion was constantly used, and frequently repeated again and again by the same persons; a ceremony derived originally from the Pagans, and which hath been condemned as superstitious by some eminent divines of the *Romish* church †. Another circumstance to be observed with relation to Christ's miracles, is that, as hath been already hinted, they were not only perfected at once, but the persons found themselves healed and restored without trouble or difficulty. But in the case of the cures affirmed to have been wrought at the Abbé's tomb, it appeareth from their own accounts, not only that they were gradual and slow, but that the persons on whom these cures were wrought, frequently suffered


† Lettres sur les Miracles, p. 258, 259. 336, 337.

the most grievous and excessive pains and tor-
 ments, and which they themselves represent to
 have been greater than ever they had felt be-
 fore, or were able to express; and these pains
 often continued for several days together in the
 utmost extremity ‡. To which may be added
 the violent agitations and convulsions, which
 became so usual on these occasions, that they
 came at length to be regarded as symptoms of
 the miraculous cures; though they could not
 be properly regarded in this view, since many
 of those who had those convulsions found no
 relief in their maladies, and even grew worse
 than before. They were frequently attended
 with strange contorsions, sometimes frightful,
 sometimes ridiculous, and sometimes inconsistent
 with the rules of modesty and decency ||. And
 accordingly they have been condemned by some
 of the most eminent *Jansenist* divines. In 1735
 there was published at *Paris* a remarkable piece,
 intituled,

LETTER
 IV.


‡ Lettres sur les Miracles, p. 339, et seq.

|| Some of those that were seized with these convulsions, or pretended to be so, were guilty of the most extravagant follies. They pretended to prophecy, and uttered several predictions, which the event soon proved to be false. One of them went so far as to foretel that the church-yard of *St. Medard*, which had been shut by the King's order, should be opened, and that *M. de Paris* should appear in the church in the presence of great numbers of people on the first of *May* following. See this and other remarkable things relating to these convulsions in *M. Vernet's Traité de la Vérité de la Religion Chrétienne*, Sect. 7. chap. 22, 23. And there cannot be a greater proof of the power of *M. de Montgeron's* prejudices, than that, in the last edition of his book in three volumes 4to, he has particularly applied himself to support and justify these convulsions.

LETTER
IV.  intituled, *Consultation sur les Convulsions*, signed by thirty appellant doctors, men of great reputation among the *Jansenists* for learning, judgment, and probity; the greater part of whom had at first entertained favourable thoughts of those convulsions; and some of them had publicly declared them to be the work of God. But now they pronounced them to be unworthy of God, of his infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness: They declared that it was a folly, a fanaticism, a scandal, and in one word, a blasphemy against God, to attribute to him these operations; and did not scruple to intimate, that they rendered the miraculous cures, to which they were pretended to be annexed, suspected. These doctors, who were called the Consultants, condemned all the convulsions in general. Others of the *Jansenist* divines, whom M. de *Montgiron* has distinguished by the title of the Antisecouristes, and whom he acknowledges to be among the most zealous appellants, and to be persons of great merit and eminence, though they did not condemn all the convulsions, yet passed a very severe censure upon those of them which that gentleman looks upon to be the most extraordinary and miraculous of all. And with regard to these convulsions in general it may be observed, that, by the acknowledgement of the most skilful physicians, nervous affections have frequently produced strange symptoms; that they are often of a catching contagious nature, and easily communicated; and that they may be coun-

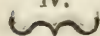
counterfeited by art. Many of those that were LETTER
IV. seized by Mr. *Heraut*, the Lieutenant de Police, acknowledged to him that they had counterfeited convulsions. In consequence of which there was an ordonnance published by the King, *January* 27, 1732, for searching out and apprehending those impostors. And yet Mr. *Hume* has thought proper to represent it, as if Monsieur *Heraut*, though he had full power to seize and examine the *witnesses* and *subjects* of these miracles, *could never reach any thing satisfactory against them.*

These must be owned to be circumstances, which administer just grounds of suspicion, and which make a wide difference between the miracles pretended to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*, and those that were performed by our Saviour, and by the Apostles in his name.

IV. The next observation I shall make is this, that several of the miracles ascribed to the Abbé, and which were pretended to be proved by many witnesses, were afterwards clearly convicted of falshood and imposture; which bringeth a great discredit upon all the rest. Whereas nothing of this kind can be alleged against the miracles by which Christianity was attested. The affair of *Anne le Franc*, of which some account was given above, shews, as M. *Des Voeux* justly observes, how little dependence is to be had upon informations in this cause directed by *Jansenists*. But this is not the only instance of this kind.

LETTER


IV.



They had published, that *La Dalmaix* had been miraculously cured by the Abbé's intercession; and this was proved by a letter pretended to have been written by herself. And yet this pretended miraculous cure was afterwards denied by the person herself, by her mother, and all her sisters: And by an arret of parliament of *May 17, 1737*, a person was declared to be convicted of having forged that, and some other letters under the name of *Dalmaix* *. The *Sieur le Doux* openly retracted the relation of a miracle said to have been wrought upon himself. *M. Des Voeux* gives several other instances of false miracles, published by the *Jansenists*, and afterwards acknowledged to be so †. *Jean Nivet* was represented, by decisive informations, as cured of his deafness, and yet it is certain that he was deaf after, as well as before. The record of the informations made by *Mr. Thomassin* is full of contradictions, which discover the falshood and perjury of the principal actress, and of the only witness of the miracle, as the archbishop of *Sens* has well proved. Many of which proofs are passed over in silence by *M. le Gros*, who undertook to answer him ‖. Some of the witnesses and persons concerned withdrew, to escape the search that was made for them, and to shun the examination and inquiry which the king had ordered; and others, who had attested

* Vernet ubi supra, Chap. XXI. † Lettres sur les Miracles, p. 171, et seq. Critique Generale, p. 204, &c. 233, 234. ‖ *Ib.* p. 242, 243.

that they were cured by the intercession of the Abbé de Paris, afterwards retracted it. The certificates themselves, on which so great a stress is laid, tend in many instances to increase the suspicion against those facts, which they were designed to confirm. The very number of those certificates, many of which are nothing at all to the purpose, and serve only for shew, are plain proofs of art and design. The manner of drawing up those certificates, and the relations of the miracles, and the style and form of expression, shew that the persons in whose names they are drawn, had the assistance of persons of a capacity much superior to their own. Long pieces in a correct style, and in perfect good order, were published under the name of mean and illiterate persons. M. le Gros owns, that the relation of *Geneviere Colin* was reformed as to the stile by a person whom she desired to do it. Thus they had it in their power, under pretence of reforming, to alter it, and got the simple person to sign the whole. Five witnesses in the case of *Anne le Franc* depose, that their certificates left with the notary were altered, falsified, and embellished with divers circumstances. Many of the relations which were at first published, and were not thought full enough, were afterwards suppressed, and do not appear in M. de *Montgeron's* collection, and others more ample were substituted in their stead, and embellished with many striking circumstances, which were omitted in the first relation. Many of the witnesses

LETTER IV.  nesses in their depositions carry it farther, than according to their own account they could have any certain knowlege. Some of them appear to have been surprized into their testimonies by false or imperfect representations; and artifices were employed to procure certificates from physicians, without bringing the case fully before them, or suffering them fairly to examine it.

To all which it may be added, that there is great reason to suspect, that many poor people feigned maladies, and pretended to be cured, on purpose to procure the gifts, and benefactions of others; which many of them did to good advantage. It is well known, and has been often proved, that in the *Romish* church there have been instances of persons, who made a trade of feigning maladies, and pretending to be miraculously cured. Such a one was *Catharine des Pres*, who was afterwards convicted by her own confession; of which Father *Le Brun* hath given a particular account, *Hist. Crit. des. Prat. Superstit.* liv. 2. cap. 4. who hath also detected several other false miracles which had been believed by numbers of that church. And may we not reasonably suspect the same of many poor people, who came to the tomb of the Abbè *de Paris*? See all these things shewn in M. *Des Voeux's Letters sur les Miracles*, *Lettre V. VI.* and especially in the VIIth and VIIIth Letters of his *Critique Generale*; where he particularly examineth every one of the miracles produced by M. *de Montgeron*. It is his observation, that
the

the more carefully we consider those relations, LETTER
IV. and compare them with the pieces that are designed to justify them, the more plainly the falshood of them appeareth. And accordingly he hath found out not merely a single contradiction, but numerous contradictions in the relations of the several miracles, compared with the certificates, and the pieces produced in qualification of them. And therefore he asketh with good reason, what becomes of demonstrations, built on such relations, and such certificates? He very properly observes, that the falsity even of a small number of facts, which are pretended to be proved by certificates, that were collected by those who took pains to verify the miracles, are sufficient to discredit all others founded on such certificates.


If the same things could have been justly objected against the miracles recorded in the New Testament, Christianity, considering the other disadvantages it laboured under, could never have been established. But the case with regard to these miracles was very different. They were not indeed proved by certificates, which may be procured by art and management. The first publishers of the Christian religion did not go about to collect evidences and testimonies. Nor was there any need of their doing so in facts that were publicly known, and the reality of which their enemies themselves were not able to deny. They acted with greater simplicity, and with an open confidence of truth. Their nar-

LETTER
IV.

rations are plain and artless; nor do they take pains to prepossess or influence the reader, either by artful insinuations, or too *violent assertions*; which our author mentions as a suspicious circumstance. Never were any of their enemies able to convict them of falshood. Far from ever denying the facts they had witnessed, or withdrawing for fear of having those facts inquired into, as several did in the other case, they openly avowed those facts before the public tribunals, and before persons of the highest authority; they never varied in their testimony, but persisted in it with an unfainting constancy, and sealed it with their blood. And it gives no small weight to their testimony, that they witnessed for facts which were designed to confirm a scheme of religion contrary to their own most rooted prejudices. Nor can it be alleged, that they were themselves divided about the reality and divinity of the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles, much less that they rejected and condemned many of them as foolish, scandalous, and injurious to the Divine Majesty; which was the censure passed upon some of the extraordinary facts relating to the *Abbé de Paris*, by the most eminent *Jansenist* divines.

Finally, the last observation I shall make is this: That the miracles of our Saviour and his apostles appear to have been wrought for an end worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness. The declared design of them was to give an attestation to the divine mission of the most excellent

person that ever appeared in the world, and to confirm the best scheme of religion that was ever published, the most manifestly conducive to the glory of God, and to the salvation of mankind. Here was an end worthy of God, and for which it was fit for him to interpose in the most extraordinary manner. And accordingly this religion thus attested and confirmed was established in the world, and soon triumphed over all opposition. All the power of the adversary, civil or sacerdotal, could not put a stop to its progress, or to the wonderful works done in confirmation of it. The effects which followed, considering the amazing difficulties it had to struggle with, and the seeming weakness and meanness of the instruments made use of to propagate it, proved the reality of those miracles, and that the whole was carried on by a divine power. But if we turn our views on the other hand to the miracles pretended to have been wrought at the tomb of the *Abbé de Paris*, it doth not appear that they answered any valuable end. There has indeed been an end found out for them, *viz.* to give a testimony from heaven to the cause of the appellants. But we may justly conclude from the wisdom of God, that in that case it would have been so ordered as to make it evident that this was the intention of them, and that he would have taken care that no opposition from men should prevail to defeat the design for which he interposed in so extraordinary a manner. But this was far from being

LETTER
IV.


LETTER the case. Mr. *Hume* indeed tells us, that “no
 VI. “ *Jansenist* was ever at a loss to account for the
 “ cessation of the miracles, when the church-
 “ yard was shut up by the King’s edict. ’Twas
 “ the touch of the tomb which operated those
 “ extraordinary effects, and when no one could
 “ approach the tomb, no effect could be ex-
 “ pected*.” But supposing that the design of
 those extraordinary divine interpositions was to
 give a testimony from heaven to the cause of
 the appellants, it is absurd to imagine that it
 would have been in the power of an earthly
 prince, by shutting up the tomb to put a stop to
 the course of the miraculous operations, and to
 render the design of God of none effect ||. It
 strengthens this, when it is farther considered,
 that the whole affair of these pretended miracles
 turned in the issue rather to the disadvantage of
 the cause it was designed to confirm. It hath
 been already observed, that some of the most
 eminent among the appellant doctors, and who
 were most zealously attached to that cause, were
 greatly scandalized at several of those miracles,
 and especially at the extraordinary convulsions
 which generally attended them. The censures
 they passed upon them gave occasion to bitter

* *Hume’s Philosophical Essays*, p. 208.


|| M. de Montgeron indeed will not allow that the miraculous operations ceased at the shutting up of the tomb; but by the miraculous operation, he principally understands the convulsions, which continued still to be carried on; but which many of the principal *Jansenists* were far from looking upon as tokens of a divine interposition.

conten-

contentions, and mutual severe reproaches and accusations. Some of the *Janſeniſt* writers themſelves complain, that whereas before there was an entire and perfect union and harmony among them, as if they had been all of one heart and ſoul, there have been ſince that time cruel diſſiſions and animoſities, ſo that thoſe who were friends before became irreconcilable enemies†. And can it be imagined, that God would execute his deſigns in ſo imperfect a manner? That he would exert his own divine power to give teſtimony to that cauſe, and yet do it in ſuch a way as to weaken that cauſe inſtead of ſupporting it, to raiſe prejudices againſt it in the minds of enemies inſtead of gaining them, and to divide and offend the friends of it inſtead of confirming and uniting them? Upon the whole, with regard to the atteſtations given to Chriſtianity, all was wiſe, conſiſtent, worthy of God, and ſuited to the end for which it was deſigned. But the other is a broken, incoherent ſcheme, which cannot be reconciled to itſelf, nor made to conſiſt with the wiſdom and harmony of the divine proceedings. The former therefore is highly credible, though the latter is not ſo.

The ſeveral conſiderations which have been mentioned do each of them ſingly, much more all of them together, ſhew ſuch ſignal differences between the miracles recorded in the goſpels, and thoſe aſcribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, that it muſt argue a peculiar degree of confidence to

† Crit. Gener. lettre V. p. 159, et ſeq.

LETTER
IV.  pretend to run a parallel between the one and the other, much more to affirm, as Mr. *Hume* has done, that the latter *much surpasses* the former in *credit and authority*. This only shews how gladly these gentlemen would lay hold on any pretence to invalidate the evidences of Christianity. Thus Mr. *Chubb*, in a discourse he published on miracles, in which he pretends impartially to represent the reasonings on both sides, produced with great pomp, a pretended miracle wrought in the *Cevennes* in 1703, and represented it as of equal credit with those of the Gospel. *M. le Moyne*, in his answer to him, hath evinced the falshood of that story in a manner that admits of no reply *. And yet it is not improbable, that some future deist may see fit some time or other to revive that story, and oppose it to the miracles recorded in the New Testament.

Mr. *Hume* concludes his Essay with applauding his own performance, and is the better pleased with the *way of reasoning* he has made use of, as he thinks “it may serve to confound
“ those dangerous friends, or disguised enemies
“ to the Christian religion, who have undertaken
“ to defend it by the principles of human reason. Our most holy religion (saith he) is
“ founded on faith, not on reason: And ’tis a
“ sure method of exposing it to put it to such a
“ trial, as it is by no means fitted to endure.” And he calls those, who undertake to defend re-

* *Le Moyne on Miracles*, p. 422, &c.

ligion by reason, *pretended Christians* †. Such a mean and ungenerous sneer is below animad-
 version. All that can be gathered from it is, that these gentlemen are very uneasy at the attempts which have been made to defend Christianity in a way of reason and argument. They it seems are mightily concerned for *the preservation* of our holy faith, and in their great friendship for that cause would give it up as indefensible. And if the best way of befriending the Christian religion be to endeavour to subvert the evidences by which it is established, our author hath taken effectual care to convince the world of his friendly intentions towards it. As to the brief hints he hath given towards the end of his Essay against the *Mosaic* History, and the miracles recorded there, I shall not here take any notice of them, both because Mr. *Adams* hath clearly and succinctly obviated them in his answer to that Essay, p. 88-94, and because I shall have occasion to resume this subject, when I come to make observations on Lord *Bolingbroke's* Posthumous Works, who hath with great virulence and bitterness, used his utmost efforts to expose the *Mosaic* writings.

† Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 204, 205.



LETTER V.

Lord Bolingbroke's Posthumous Works, an insolent attempt on religion natural and revealed. Not written according to the laws of method. His fair professions, and the advantageous account he gives of his own design. He exalteth himself above all that have written before him, antients and moderns: Blames the Free-thinkers for taking unbecoming liberties: Yet writes himself without any regard to the rules of decency. His outrageous invectives against the holy Scriptures, particularly against the writings of Moses and St. Paul. The severe censures he passes on the most celebrated Heathen Philosophers. But above all, the virulent and contemptuous reproaches he casts upon Christian Philosophers and Divines, antient and modern. A general account of his scheme, and the main principles to which it is reducible.

S I R,

THE account you gave me of the late pompous edition of the works of the late Lord Viscount *Bolingbroke* in five large volumes quarto made me very desirous to see them. But it was some time after the publication of them, before I had an opportunity of gratifying my curiosity,

riosity. I have now read them with some care and attention. The works he had published in his own life-time, and which are republished in this edition, had created a high opinion of the genius and abilities of the author. In them he had treated chiefly concerning matters of a political nature. And it were greatly to be wish'd for his own reputation, and for the benefit of mankind, that he had confined himself to subjects of that kind, in that part of his works which he designed to be published after his decease. These his posthumous works make by far the greater part of this collection. His *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, which were published before the rest, had prepared the world not to look for any thing from him, that was friendly to Christianity or the holy Scriptures. But I am apt to think that the extreme insolence, the virulence and contempt with which in his other posthumous works he hath treated those things that have been hitherto accounted most sacred among Christians, and the open attacks he hath made upon some important principles of natural religion itself, have exceeded whatever was expected or imagined. There is ground to apprehend, that the quality and reputation of the author, his high pretensions to reason and freedom of thought, his great command of words, and the positive and dictatorial air he every-where assumes, may be apt to impose upon many readers, and may do mischief in an age too well prepared already for receiving such impressions. Upon these

LETTER ^{V.} considerations you have been pleased to think that a distinct examination of this writer might help to furnish a very proper supplement to the view which hath been taken of the Deistical Writers of the last and present century. I was, I must confess, not very fond of the employment. For what pleasure could be proposed in raking into such a heap of materials, which are thrown together without much order, and among which one is sure to meet with many things shocking to any man that has a just veneration for our holy religion, and who hath its honour and interests really at heart.

Before I enter on a distinct consideration of what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered both against natural and revealed religion, I shall make some general observations on his spirit and design, and his manner of treating the subjects he has undertaken, which may help us to form a judgment of his character as a writer, and how far he is to be depended upon.

The manner of writing his Lordship hath generally chosen is by way of essay. He has been far from confining himself to the laws of method: And perhaps thought it beneath so great a genius to stoop to common rules. But there is certainly a medium between being too stiff and pedantic, and too loose and negligent. He is sensible that he has not been very methodical, and seems to please himself in it. He declares that "he does not observe in these Essays, any
" more than he used to do in conversation, a
" just

“ just proportion in the members of his dis-^{LETTER}
 “ course*.” And that he has thrown his re-^{V.}
 flections upon paper as they “ occurred to his
 “ thoughts, and as the frequent interruptions
 “ to which he was exposed would give him
 “ leave†.” He condescends to make a kind of
 apology for this way of writing, when he says,
 “ I will endeavour not to be tedious; and this
 “ endeavour will succeed the better perhaps by
 “ declining any over-strict observation of me-
 “ thod‡.” But I am apt to think he would
 have been less tedious, and more enlightening
 to his reader, if he had been more observant
 of the rules of method. He might then have
 avoided many of those repetitions and digres-
 sions, which so frequently recur in these Essays,
 and which notwithstanding all the advantages
 of his style, and the vivacity of his imagina-
 tion, often prove, if I may judge of others by
 myself, very disagreeable and irksome to the
 reader.

As to his design in these writings, if we are
 to take his own word for it, very great advan-
 tage might be expected from them to mankind.
 He believes “ few men have consulted others,
 “ both the living and the dead, with less preci-
 “ pitation, and in a greater spirit of docility,
 “ than he has done: He distrusted himself, not
 “ his teachers, men of the greatest name, an-
 “ tient and modern. But he found at last, that

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 460.

† *Id.* p. 556.

‡ *Id.* p. 318.

LETTER

V.



“ it was safer to trust himself than them, and
 “ to proceed by the light of his own under-
 “ standing, than to wander after those *ignes*
 “ *fatui* of philosophy*.” He is sensible that
 “ it is the modest, not the presumptuous en-
 “ quirer, who makes a real and safe progress
 “ in the discovery of divine truth †;” and that
 “ candour and knowledge are qualifications which
 “ should always go together, and are insepa-
 “ rable from the love of truth, and promote
 “ one another in the discovery of it ‡.” He
 “ contents himself to be governed by the dic-
 “ tates of nature, and is therefore in no dan-
 “ ger of becoming atheistical, superstitious, or
 “ sceptical ||.”

In his introduction to his *Essays*, in a letter to Mr. *Pope*, he gives a most pompous account of his intentions, and evidently raiseth himself above the greatest men antient or modern. He represents metaphysical divines and philosophers, as “ having bewildered themselves, and a great
 “ part of mankind, in such inextricable laby-
 “ rinths of hypothetical reasonings, that few can
 “ find their way back, and none can find it for-
 “ ward into the road of truth §.” He declares that “ natural theology, and natural religion,
 “ have been corrupted to such a degree, that
 “ it is grown, and was so long since, as neces-
 “ sary to plead the cause of God against the
 “ divine as against the atheist; to assert his ex-

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 320. † *Ib.* p. 344.
 ‡ *Ib.* p. 492. || Vol. V. p. 492. § Vol. III. p. 327.

“istence against the latter, to defend his at-
 “tributes against the former, and to justify his
 “providence against both*.” That “truth and
 “falshood, knowlege and ignorance, revela-
 “tions of the Creator, inventions of the crea-
 “ture, dictates of reason, sallies of enthusiasm,
 “have been blended so long together in systems
 “of theology, that it may be thought danger-
 “ous to separate them†.” And he seems to
 think this was a task reserved for him. He pro-
 poses “to distinguish genuine and pure Theism
 “from the profane mixtures of human imagi-
 “nation; and to go to the root of that error
 “which encourages our curiosity, sustains our
 “pride, fortifies our prejudices, and gives pre-
 “tence to delusion; to discover the true nature
 “of human knowlege, how far it extends, how
 “far it is real, and where and how it begins to
 “be fantastical‡;” “that the gaudy visions of
 “error being dispell’d, men may be accustomed
 “to the simplicity of truth.” For this he ex-
 pects to be “treated with scorn and contempt
 “by the whole theological and metaphysical
 “tribe, and railed at as an infidel||.” But “lay-
 “ing aside all the immense volumes of fathers
 “and councils, schoolmen, casuists, and contro-
 “versial writers, he is determined to seek for ge-
 “nuine Christianity with that simplicity of
 “spirit with which it is taught in the Gospel
 “by Christ himself§. The guides he proposes

LETTER
 V.


* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 327, 328. † *Ib.* p. 331.

‡ *Ib.* p. 328. § *Ib.* p. 330. || *Ib.* p. 332.

LETTER
V.

“ to follow are the works, and the word of
 “ God *.” And he declares, that “ for himself
 “ he thought it much better not to write at all,
 “ than to write under any restraint from deli-
 “ vering the whole truth of things as it appeared
 “ to him †.”

But though he thus professes an impartial love of truth, and to deliver his sentiments with freedom, yet he seems resolved, where he happens to differ from received opinions, to shew a decent regard to the established religion of his country. He praiseth *Scævola* and *Varro*, who, he says, “ Both thought that things evidently
 “ false might deserve an outward respect, when
 “ they are interwoven with a system of govern-
 “ ment. This outward respect every good sub-
 “ ject will shew them in such a case. He will
 “ not propagate those errors, but he will be
 “ cautious how he propagates even truth in op-
 “ position to them ‡.” He blames not only
 “ that arbitrary *tyrannical spirit*, that puts *on*
 “ the mask of religious zeal, but that *presump-*
 “ *tuous factious spirit* that has appeared *under the*
 “ *mask of liberty*; and which, if it should *pre-*
 “ *vail*, would destroy at once the general *influ-*
 “ *ence of religion*, by shaking the foundations of
 “ it which education had laid. But he thinks,
 “ there is a middle way between these extremes,
 “ in which a reasonable man and a good citizen
 “ may direct his steps ||.” It is to be presumed

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 347. † Vol. IV. p. 54.
 ‡ Vol. III. p. 331. || *Ib.* p. 332.

therefore

therefore that he would have it thought that ^{LETTER}
 this is the way he himself hath taken. He men- ^{V.}
 tions with approbation the maxims of the *Soufys*,
 a set of philosophers in *Persia*: One of which is
 —“ If you find no reason to doubt concerning
 “ the opinions of your fathers, keep to them,
 “ they will be sufficient for you. If you find
 “ any reason to doubt concerning them, seek
 “ the truth quietly, but take care not to dis-
 “ turb the minds of other men.” He profes-
 seth to proceed by these rules, and blameth some
 who are called Free-thinkers, for imagining that
 “ as every man has a right to think and judge
 “ for himself, he has therefore a right of speak-
 “ ing according to the full freedom of his
 “ thoughts. The freedom belongs to him as a
 “ rational creature: He lies under the restraint
 “ as a member of society*.”

But notwithstanding these fair professions,
 perhaps there scarce ever was an author, who had
 less regard to the rules of decency in writing than
 Lord *Bolingbroke*. The holy Scriptures are re-
 ceived with great veneration among Christians;
 and the religion there taught is the religion pub-
 licly professed and established in these nations;
 and therefore, according to his own rule, ought
 to be treated with a proper respect. And yet
 on many occasions he throws out the most out-
 rageous abuse against those sacred writings, and
 the authors of them. He compares the history
 of the Pentateuch to the *Romances* Don Quixote

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol III. p. 333. 334.

A View of the DEISTICAL Writers.

LETTER ^{V.} was so fond of, and pronounces that they who receive them as authentic are not much less mad than he *. That "it is no less than blasphemy" to assert the *Jewish* Scriptures to have been "divinely inspired;" and he represents those that attempt to justify them as having "ill hearts" as well as heads, and as worse than atheists, tho' they may pass for saints †. He chargeth those with impiety, "who would impose on us as the word of God, a book which contains scarce any thing that is not repugnant to the wisdom, power, and other attributes of a Supreme All-perfect Being ‡." And he roundly pronounceth, that "there are gross defects and palpable falshoods in almost every page of the Scriptures, and the whole tenor of them is such, as no man, who acknowledges a Supreme All-perfect Being, can believe it to be his word §." This is a brief specimen of his invectives against the sacred writings of the Old Testament, and which he repeateth on many occasions. He affecteth indeed to speak with seeming respect of Christianity, yet he hath not only endeavoured to invalidate the evidences that are brought to support it, but he passeth the severest censures upon doctrines which he himself representeth as original and essential doctrines of the Christian religion. He makes the most injurious representation of the doctrine of our redemption by the blood of Christ, and

X
* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 280.
306. † *Ib.* p. 308. § *Ib.* p. 293.

† *Ib.* p. 299.


chargeth it as repugnant to all our ideas of order, of justice, of goodness, and even of theism*. LETTER
V.
And after a most virulent invective against the Jewish notion of God, as partial, cruel, arbitrary and unjust, he asserts that the character imputed to him by the Christian doctrine of redemption, and future punishments, is as bad or worse†. Great is the contempt and reproach he hath poured forth upon St. Paul, who was the penman of a considerable part of the New Testament, and whose name and writings have been always deservedly had in great veneration in the Christian church. He chargeth him with dissimulation and falshood, and even with madness‡. He asserts that his gospel was different from that of Christ, and contradictory to it§. That he writes confusedly, obscurely, and unintelligibly;—and where his gospel is intelligible, it is often absurd, profane, and trifling||.

Some of those gentlemen who have shewn little respect for the holy Scriptures, have yet spoke with admiration of many of the sages of antiquity. But Lord *Bolingbroke* has on all occasions treated the greatest men of all ages with the utmost contempt and scorn. It is allowable indeed for sincere and impartial enquirers after truth, to differ from persons of high reputation for knowledge and learning, antient and modern. And sometimes it is the more necessary to point

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 318. Vol. V. p. 291. 532.

† *Id.* p. 532, 533. ‡ Vol. IV. p. 172. 306. § *Id.* p. 313.

327, 328. || *Id.* p. 330, 331.


LETTER V.  out their errors, lest the authority of great names should lead men aside from truth. But whilst we think ourselves obliged to detect their mistakes, there is a decent regard to be paid them. It would be wrong to treat them in a reproachful and contemptuous manner. Yet this is what our author hath done. If all the passages were laid together, in which he hath inveighed against the wisest and most learned men of all ages, especially the philosophers, metaphysicians, and divines, they would fill no small volume. And indeed these kind of declamatory invectives recur so often in these Essays, as cannot but create great disgust to every reader of taste. I shall mention a few passages out of a multitude that might be produced, and which may serve as a sample of the rest. He saith of the philosophers, that “they seem to acquire knowledge only as
 “ a necessary step to error, and grow so fond of
 “ the latter, that they esteem it no longer an
 “ human, but raise it by an imaginary apotheosis
 “ up to a divine science—That these searchers
 “ after truth, these lovers of wisdom, are nothing
 “ better than venders of false wares---And the
 “ most irrational of all proceedings pass for the
 “ utmost efforts of human reason*.” He represents metaphysical divines and philosophers as having “wandered many thousand years in
 “ imaginary light and real darkness †.” He frequently chargeth them with *madness*, and sometimes with *blasphemy*; and that they “flag-

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 490. † Vol. IV. p. 8:
 “gered

“gered about, and jostled one another in their
 “dreams*.” Speaking of *Plato* and *Aristotle*,
 he says, “their works have been preserved, per-
 “haps more to the detriment than to the ad-
 “vancement of learning †.” And though he
 sometimes commends *Socrates*, he pronounces
 that he “substituted fantastical ideas instead of
 “real knowlege, and corrupted science to the
 “very source.” That “he lost himself in the
 “clouds---when he declared, that the two offices
 “of philosophy are the contemplation of God,
 “and the abstracting of the soul from corporeal
 “sense;”---and that he and *Plato* were mad
 enough to think themselves capable of such
 contemplation and such abstraction ‡. Besides
 many occasional passages scattered throughout
 these Essays, there are several large sections which
 contain almost nothing else than invectives
 against *Plato* and his philosophy. He says, that a
 philosopher “treated every subject, whether cor-
 poreal or intellectual, like a bombast poet, and a
 “mad theologian §.” That “he who reads
 “*Plato*’s works like a man in his senses, will be
 “tempted to think on many occasions that the
 “author was not so:”---And that “no man
 “ever dreamed so wildly as this author wrote ||.”
 He chargeth him with “a false sublime in style,
 “and that no writer can sink lower than he into
 “a tedious socratical irony, into certain flimsy

LETTER
 V.

* Bolingbroke’s Works, Vol. III. p. 553, 554. Vol. IV.
 p. 129. 150. † Vol. III. p. 392. ‡ Vol. IV. p. 113.
 § *Ib.* p. 129. || *Ib.* p. 344. 357.

LETTER V.  "hypothetical reasonings that prove nothing, and into allusions that are mere vulgarisms, and that neither explain nor inforce any thing that wants to be explained or inforced *." He represents all the commentators and *translators* of *Plato* as *dull* or *mad*---and calls *Ficinus delirious*, and *Dacier simple* and a *bigot*, and a *Platonic madman*†. The true reason of the particular dislike he every-where expresses against that philosopher seems to be what he calls his "rambling speculations about the divine and "spiritual nature, about immaterial substances, "about the immortality of the soul, and about "the rewards and punishments of a future "state ‡."

As to the Stoics he declares, "that their theology and morality were alike absurd." That in endeavouring to account how it came that there is evil in the world, and that the best men have often the greatest share of this evil, "they "talked mere nonsense, figurative, sublime, metaphysical, but nonsense still §." The antient *theists* in general he represents as having been seduced many ways into a confederacy with the atheists, and particularly blames them for pretending to connect moral attributes, such as we conceive them, with the physical attributes of God; which, he affirms, gave great advantage to the objections of the atheists ||.

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol IV. p. 140, 141. 353, 354
 † *Ib.* p. 107. 140. 355. ‡ *Ib.* p. 347, 348. § Vol. V
 p. 247. 317. || *Ib.* p. 316.

But there is no sort of men against whom he inveighs with greater licence of reproach than the Christian divines and philosophers. He frequently speaks of the antient fathers with the utmost contempt: That they were superstitious, credulous, lying men;-- and that "the
" greatest of them were unfit to write or speak
" on any subject that required closeness of rea-
" soning, an evangelical candour, and even
" common ingenuousness*." As to the more modern divines, he takes every occasion of insulting and abusing them. Not only doth he represent them as " declaimers who have little
" respect for their readers,---as hired to defend
" the Christian system,-- and as seeking nothing
" more than the honour of the gown, by have-
" ing the last word in every dispute †." But he says, " they talk a great deal of blasphemy on
" the head of internal divine characters of Scrip-
" ture ‡." He often repeats it, that *atheists deny God*, but the *divines defame him*, which, he thinks, is the *worse of the two*. He charges them with *madness*, and *worse than madness* §. That " they have recourse to trifling distinctions,
" and dogmatical affirmations, the last retrench-
" ments of obstinacy ||. That " of all fools
" the most presumptuous, and at the same time
" the most trifling, are metaphysical philoso-
" phers and divines ¶¶." He charges them in

LETTER
V.
~~~~~

\* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 337, 338. Vol. IV. p. 586. † Vol. III. p. 290. Vol. V. p. 286. 314. ‡ Vol. III. p. 272. § Vol. IV. p. 273. || Vol. V. p. 188. ¶¶ *Ib.* p. 493.

LETTERAN address he makes to God with “owning his  
 V. “existence only to censure his works, and the  
 “dispensations of his providence\*.” And frequently represents them as in *alliance with the* *atheists*, as *betraying the cause of God* to them, and as doing *their best in concert with these their allies*, to destroy both the *goodness* and *justice* of God †. He declares, that “he who  
 “follows them cannot avoid presumption and  
 “profaneness, and must be much upon his  
 “guard to avoid blasphemy ‡.” That the  
 “preachers of natural and revealed religion have  
 “been loudest in their clamours against pro-  
 “vidence, and have done nothing more than  
 “repeat what the atheists have said; ---and that  
 “they attempt to prove that the supreme Be-  
 “ing is the tyrant of the world he governs§.” And the same charge he advanceth against the Christian philosophers in general.

But besides these general invectives against Christian philosophers and divines, he hath particularly attacked some of the most celebrated names in a manner little reconcileable to good manners, and the decency which ought to be observed towards persons of distinguished reputation, even when we think them in the wrong. Speaking of “many reverend persons, who, he  
 “says, have had their heads turned by a pre-  
 “ternatural fermentation of the brain, or a phi-  
 “losophical delirium,” ---- he observes, that

\* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. V. p. 339 + *Ib.* p. 341. 346.  
 393, &c. † *Ib.* p. 464. § *Ib.* p. 484, 485.

“ none has been more so than Dr. *Cudworth*.<sup>LETTER</sup>  
 “ ---He read too much to think enough.” He <sup>V.</sup>  
 represents him as having “ given a nonsensical  
 “ paraphrase of nonsense,”---and that “ the good  
 “ man passed his life in the study of an unmean-  
 “ ing jargon: And as he learned so he taught\*.”  
 He charges Bishop *Cumberland* with “ meta-  
 “ physical jargon, and theological blasphemy †.”  
*Stillingfleet* is spoken of with contempt; as also  
*Huet*, *Bochart*, and the Christian antiquaries ‡.  
 Nor is Archbishop *Tillotson* treated with greater  
 regard. He talks in a very slighting way of those  
 that have written on the law of nature, parti-  
 cularly *Grotius*, *Selden*, and *Puffendorf*. That  
 they “ puzzle and perplex the plainest thing  
 “ in the world, and seem to be great writers on  
 “ this subject, by much the same right as he  
 “ might be called a great traveller, who should  
 “ go from *London* to *Paris* by the *Cape of*  
 “ *Good Hope* §.” There is none of the Chri-  
 stian philosophers of whom he speaks with so  
 much respect as Mr. *Locke*; yet he represents  
 him as having “ dreamed that he had a power of  
 “ forming abstract ideas;” and mentions this as  
 a proof that “ there is such a thing as a philo-  
 “ sophical delirium ||.” And he charges it upon  
 him as a great inconsistency, that he should write  
 a Commentary on St. *Paul*’s Epistles, and a Dis-  
 course on the Reasonableness of Christianity,

\* Bolingbroke’s Works, Vol. III. p. 353. Vol. IV. p. 92.  
 † Vol. V. p. 82. ‡ Vol. III. p. 264. Vol. IV. p. 13. § Vol. V.  
 p. 68. || Vol. III. p. 441, 442.

LETTER after he had written an Essay on Human Under-  
 V. standing\*.

But there is no one person whom he treats with so much rudeness and insolence as the late eminently learned Dr. *Samuel Clarke*. He calls him a presumptuous dogmatist, and represents him as having “impiously advanced, that we “ know the rule God governs by as well as he, “ ---and that like another *Eunomius*, he pre- “ sumes to know God, his moral nature at least, “ and to teach others to know him, as well as “ he knows himself †.” He chargeth him with a *foolish and wicked rhodomontade*, “ with pre- “ tending to make infallible demonstrations, “ like the Pope’s decrees, and sending every “ one to the devil, who does not believe in “ them ‡:” And with a rhapsody of presump- “ tuous reasonings, of prophane absurdities, of “ evasions that seem to answer whilst they only “ perplex, and in one word, the most arbitrary “ and least reasonable suppositions §.” He saith, that “ the retrenchments cast up by him are fee- “ ble beyond belief;”---that “ he boasts like a “ bully, who looks fierce, speaks big, and is “ little to be feared ||.” Not only does he call him an *audacious and vain sophist* |||, but he carries it so far as to say, that “ he and *Wollaston* “ do in effect renounce God, as much as the “ rankest of the atheistical tribe \*\*. With re-

\* *Bolingbroke's Works*, Vol. IV. p. 166. 295. † Vol. III. p. 52. Vol. V. p. 499. ‡ *Ib.* p. 252. § *Ib.* p. 292. || *Ib.* p. 280. 293. ||| *Ib.* p. 393. \*\* *Ib.* p. 484, 485.



gard to the last-mentioned celebrated writer, LETTER V.  
*Mr. Wollaston*, besides the severe reproach cast upon him in the passage I have just cited, Lord *Bolingbroke* elsewhere treats him as “ a licentious maker of hypotheses---and a whining philosopher.” He represents all that he hath said about the immortality of the soul “ as a string of arbitrary suppositions;” and that “ his discourse on that subject is such as would lead one to think that the philosopher who held it was a patient of Dr. *Monroe’s*, not yet perfectly restored to his senses\*.” He acknowledges him indeed to have been a man of *parts and learning*, but charges him with *writing nonsense*; that he, and such as he, were *learned lunatics*; and he treats his way of arguing about a future state, as a *specimen of that sort of madness*, which is called a *dementia quoad hoc*†. The same censure he passeth on the late Lord President of *Scotland*, “ that he was indeed a man of capacity, good sense, and knowledge, but was in a *delirium*, and *mad quoad hoc* when he wrote against *Tindal*‡.”

You cannot but have observed in reading over several of the passages which have been produced, that it is familiar with Lord *Bolingbroke* to represent those as mad and out of their senses, who happen to differ from him, at least as mad with regard to the particular point in difference. I shall only mention one passage more to this

\* *Bolingbroke’s Works*, Vol. III. p. 515. 518. Vol. V. p. 388.

† *Ib.* p. 474. ‡ *Ib.* p. 523.

LETTER purpose, out of the many that might be pro-  
 V. duced. Having compared the reasoners *a priori*  
 to persons in *Bedlam*, and the several sorts of  
 madmen there, he adds, that “atheists are one  
 “sort of madmen, many divines and theists  
 “another sort;”---and that “these sorts of mad-  
 “men are principally to be found in colleges  
 “and schools, where different sects have ren-  
 “dered this sort of madness, which is occasional  
 “elsewhere, both epidemical and traditional ||.”  
 If one was to imitate this author’s manner of  
 talking, one might be apt to charge him as be-  
 ing seized with a sort of madness when certain  
 subjects come in his way---metaphysics---artificial  
 theology---*Plato* and Platonic philosophy---spi-  
 ritual substance, and incorporeal essence----but  
 above all, the Christian divines and clergy.-----  
 These, when he happens to meet with them,  
 bring one of his fits upon him, and often set  
 him a raving for several pages together. But I  
 confess I too much dislike such a way of writing,  
 to make recriminations of this kind. And yet  
 his Lordship tells the divines of the *discretion of*  
*their adversaries*, and would have them *re-*  
*turn it with discretion*. And he represents the  
*orthodox bullies*, as he calls them, as “affecting  
 “to triumph over men, who employ but part  
 “of their strength, as tiring them with imper-  
 “tinent paradoxes, and provoking them with  
 “unjust reflections, and often by the foulest  
 “language †.”

|| Bolingbroke’s Works, Vol. V. p. 369, 370. † Vol. III.  
 p. 272, 273.

I am apt to think that by this time you are LETTER  
V.  
weary of reading over such a heap of abusive reflections, so unbecoming any man of learning and education, much more one so conversant in the polite world, as Lord *Bolingbroke* had been. The transcribing them out of his Essays was no very agreeable employment. But they so often occur there, and make so remarkable a part of the works of this right honourable author, that it was absolutely necessary to take some notice of them. One thing may be safely collected from his writing after this manner, *viz.* that he had a very high opinion of the superiority of his own understanding, and a sovereign contempt for all those that were in different sentiments from him, whether philosophers antient or modern, or divines, but especially for the latter.

If we examine what foundation there is for these high pretensions, or what new and important discoveries this writer hath made in religion or philosophy, which may be of real use to mankind, the principal things in his scheme may be reduced to the following heads:

1. That there is one Supreme All-perfect Being, the eternal and original cause of all things, of almighty power and infinite wisdom; but that we must not pretend to ascribe to him any moral attributes, distinct from his physical, especially holiness, justice, and goodness: That he has not these attributes according to the ideas we conceive of them, nor any thing equivalent to those

LETTER <sup>V.</sup> those qualities as they are in us; and that to pretend to deduce moral obligations from those attributes, or to talk of imitating God in his moral attributes, is enthusiasm or blasphemy.

2. That God made the world, and established the laws of this system at the beginning: But that he doth not now concern himself in the affairs of men, or that if he doth, his providence only extendeth to collective bodies, but hath no regard to individuals, to their actions, or to the events that befall them.

3. That the soul is not a distinct substance from the body: That the whole man is dissolved at death; and that though it may be useful to mankind to believe the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, yet it is a fiction, which hath no real foundation in nature and reason: And that to pretend to argue for future retributions from the apprehended unequal distributions of this present state, is absurd and blasphemous, and is to cast the most unworthy reflections on divine providence.

4. That the law of nature is what reason discovereth to us concerning our duty as founded in the human system: That it is clear and obvious to all mankind; but has been obscured and perverted by antient philosophers and modern divines: That it has not been set in a proper light by those who have undertaken to treat of it; and therefore he hath represented it in its genuine purity and simplicity: And that the sanctions



functions of that law relate to men not individually, but collectively considered. LETTER  
V.

5. That from the clearness and sufficiency of the law of nature, it may be concluded that God hath made no other revelation of his will to mankind: And that there is no need or use for any extraordinary supernatural revelation.

6. That it is profane and blasphemous to ascribe the *Jewish* Scriptures to revelation or inspiration from God: That the history contained there is false and incredible, and the scheme of religion taught in those writings is absolutely unworthy of God, and repugnant to his divine perfections.

7. That the New Testament consists of two different gospels, opposite to one another, that of Christ and that of St. Paul. That Christianity in its genuine simplicity, as taught by Jesus Christ, and contained in the evangelical writings, is a benevolent institution, and may be regarded as a republication of the law of nature, or rather of the theology of *Plato*: That the morals it teaches are pure, but no other than the philosophers had taught before, and that some of its precepts are not agreeable to the natural law; and some of its original doctrines, particularly those relating to the redemption of mankind by the death of Christ, and to future rewards and punishments, are absurd, and inconsistent with the attributes of God.

These appear to me to be the most remarkable things in the late Lord *Bolingbroke's* Posthumous

LETTER  
V.

Works, as far as natural and revealed religion is concerned. And the method I propose to pursue in my observations upon them is this:

I shall first consider the attempts he hath made to subvert the main principles that lie at the foundation of all religion; *viz.* those relating to the moral attributes of God, a particular providence extending to the individuals of the human race, the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retributions. I shall next examine the account he hath given of the law of nature, and of the duties and sanctions of that law. After which it will be proper to consider what he hath offered concerning divine revelation in general, with a view to shew that an extraordinary revelation of the will of God to mankind is absolutely needless, and that therefore we may conclude that God hath never given such a revelation at all. I shall proceed in the next place to a particular and distinct examination of the objections he hath urged against the truth and divine original of the *Mosaic* revelation, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament. And shall conclude with considering what more directly relateth to the Christian revelation properly so called, to its proofs and evidences, and to its laws and doctrines, all which he hath endeavoured to expose.

This I hope may be sufficient to answer the design I have in view, which is to obviate the principal mischiefs to religion, which Lord *Bolingbroke's*

*lingbroke's* Works seem fitted to produce. Other things there are in these volumes, which might furnish matter for many reflections, but which I shall take little or no notice of, as they do not come within the compass of the plan I propose.

LETTER  
V.

*I am, &c.*



LETTER

## L E T T E R VI.

*Lord Bolingbroke asserts the existence of God against the Atheists, but rejects the argument a priori, and that drawn from the general consent of mankind. He is for reducing all the divine attributes to wisdom and power, and blames the divines for distinguishing between the physical and moral attributes. He asserts that we cannot ascribe goodness and justice to God, according to our ideas of them, nor argue with any certainty about them. That it is absurd to deduce moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or to pretend to imitate him in those attributes. Observations upon this scheme. It is shewn, that the moral attributes are necessarily included in the idea of the absolutely perfect Being. The author's objections against ascribing those attributes to God, or distinguishing them from his physical attributes, particularly considered. His manifold inconsistencies and contradictions.*

S I R,

**I**N my last a general account was given of the scheme Lord *Bolingbroke* seems to have had in view in his *Posthumous Works*, and of the



the main principles to which it is reducible. LETTER  
VI.  
 now proceed to a more distinct examination of those principles; and shall begin with that which lieth at the foundation of all Religion, the existence and attributes of God. And it must be acknowledged, that his Lordship every where in the strongest terms asserteth the existence of the one Supreme All-perfect Being, the Great Author of the universe. He represents this as *strictly demonstrable*, and treats the opinion of the atheists as *infinitely absurd*; and that they can *only cavil*, but *cannot reason*, against the existence of the first cause; of which, he thinks, we may be in reason as sure as of our own existence. There are several passages in his works, in which he expresseth himself devoutly with regard to the Supreme Being, and professeth seriously to adore him. And there are some instances of his addressing him with great solemnity, and in a religious manner\*.

I need not take any notice of what he hath briefly offered for demonstrating the existence of a Deity†. He has said nothing on this head, but what hath been frequently urged to great advantage by others before him; and particularly by Dr. Clarke, in what his Lordship is pleased to call his *pretended demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*||.

\* See particularly Vol. III. p. 247. 358. Vol. V. p. 338, &c.

† Vol. III. p. 353, 354. || *Ib.* p. 52.

LETTER

VI.

Our author indeed is for confining the proof to the argument *a posteriori*, and is for absolutely rejecting the argument *a priori*, whereas Dr. Clarke insists upon both. And I cannot help thinking that both may be highly useful; and that they are then most effectual, and come with the greatest force, when they come in aid of one another.

As Lord *Bolingbroke* rejects the argument *a priori* for the existence and perfections of God, so he seems not willing to allow that which is drawn from the general consent of mankind. He says, it will indeed prove, that men generally believed a God, but not that such a Being exists; and he represents it as *trifling to insist upon it*\*. And in a letter occasioned by one of Archbishop *Tillotson's* sermons, Vol. III. p. 257, *et seq.* he finds fault with that great divine for making use of that argument, and disingenuously represents it, as if he had rested the proof of a Deity principally upon it†; which he is far from doing, though it must be acknowledged to be a consideration of great weight. He particularly blames the Archbishop for ascribing this consent to the nature of the human mind, on which God has impressed an innate idea of himself; but he owns, that afterwards he softens it by saying, that “the human mind is so disposed “that men may discover in the due use of its “faculties, that there is a God ||.” And he speaks of some divines who explain it thus, that

\* Vol. III. p. 247.

† *Ib.* p. 258. 267.. || *Ib.* 258.

the

the belief of God is founded on a certain natural proportion there is between this great truth, and the conceptions of the human mind. But our author thinks, that “such a *natural and intimate proportion* between the existence of God, and the conceptions of the human mind, may appear chimerical, and perhaps is so\*.” And observes, that “Polytheism was more conformable to the natural conceptions of the human mind, especially in the most antient and ignorant ages, than the belief of One first intelligent Cause, the sole Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things.” Yet he afterwards declares, that “the idea of an All-wise and All-powerful Being, the first cause of all things, is so *proportionable to human reason*, that it must have been received into the minds of men, as soon as they began to contemplate the face of nature, and to exercise their reason in such contemplations†.” And in his reflections on Mr. *Maupertuis*, who had slighted the argument from the general consent of mankind, he observes, that “it is general enough to shew *the proportion which this truth bears to the universal reason of mankind* ||.” You cannot but observe here, that he directly makes use of that manner of expression, which he had before blamed others for using.

\* Vol. III. p. 259. 260. † Vol. IV. p. 195. || *Ib.* p. 256.

LETTER

VI.

But it will be proper more distinctly to inquire into the idea this writer gives of God, and of the divine perfections. The only attributes of God which he insisteth upon as necessary to be known by us are his power and wisdom. “We rise” (saith he) from the knowledge of ourselves, “and of the works of God, to a knowledge of his existence, and his *wisdom* and *power*, which we call infinite\*.” He blames those who presume to define the moral attributes of an All-perfect Being; and thinks “we ought to content ourselves to know that he exists by the necessity of his nature, and that his *wisdom* and *power* are infinite†.” He declares, that “a self-existent Being, the first cause of all things, infinitely *powerful* and infinitely *wise*, is the God of natural theology: That as the whole system of the universe bears witness to this truth, so the whole system of natural religion rests on it, and requires no broader foundation. These systems are God’s systems||.” We see here there is no mention made of the divine goodness, as included in the idea we form of the Deity. Natural theology or natural religion, requireth no broader a foundation than the acknowledging the wisdom and power of God. And so it generally is in the account our author gives of God and his attributes; as if *optimus* were not to be joined with *maximus* in the Deist’s creed, or in the idea natural religion teacheth us to form of God. And

\* Vol. IV. p. 88. † Vol. V. p. 235. || *ib.* p. 316.

accord-



accordingly he finds fault with what he calls *ar-L* <sup>LETTER</sup>  
*tificial theology*, for pretending “to connect <sup>VI.</sup>  
 “moral attributes, such as we conceive them,  
 “and such as they are relatively to us, with the  
 “physical attributes of God.” He says, “there  
 “is no sufficient foundation for this proceed-  
 “ing in the phænomena of nature, and that in  
 “several cases they are repugnant.” And he ex-  
 pressly mentions it among the wrong notions of  
 the antient theists, and which gave advantage  
 to the atheists with regard to the question about  
 the original of evil, that they maintained, that  
 “God is just and good, and righteous, and holy,  
 “as well as powerful and wise.” He blames  
 them for saying, that “love was the first prin-  
 ciple of things, and that it determined God to  
 “bring forth his creatures into existence\*,” and  
 that, as *Seneca* says, *usque ad delicias amamur*.  
 And elsewhere quoting a passage of *Dr. Clarke*,  
 in which God is represented as having a *ten-  
 der and hearty concern for the happiness of man*,  
 he says, “these are strange words to be applied  
 “to the Supreme Being†.” And he argueth  
 at great length against those who suppose, that  
 God made man only to be happy.

He frequently censureth the divines for dis-  
 tinguishing between God’s physical and moral  
 attributes: And “cannot see one religious pur-  
 “pose, that this distinction is necessary to an-  
 “swer‡. God’s moral attributes (he says) can  
 “only be discerned in the works of God, and

\* Vol. V. p. 316, 317. † *Ib.* p. 63. ‡ *Ib.* p. 62.

LETTER VI. “ in the conduct of his providence: And that  
 “ it is evident, they are not, cannot be so  
 “ discerned in them, as to be the object of our  
 “ imitation\*.” He represents it as great presumption to pretend to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God; and that the absurdity of this cannot be too often exposed†. And after having asserted, that “ we cannot rise from our moral obligations to God’s supposed moral attributes, he adds, that “ he calls them *supposed*, because after all that “ has been supposed to prove a necessary connection between his physical and moral attributes, we may observe them in his wisdom; “ —and that the effects of his wisdom give us “ sometimes ideas of those moral qualities, which “ we acquire by reflections on ourselves, and “ sometimes not‡.” He thinks the divines are to be blamed “ for talking of God’s infinite “ goodness and justice, as of his infinite wisdom “ and power||.” And observes, that “ every “ thing shews the wisdom and power of God, “ conformably to our ideas of wisdom and “ power, in the physical world and in the moral: But every thing does not shew in like “ manner the justice and goodness of God, conformably to our ideas of those attributes in “ either§.” That “ though the wisdom of God “ does not appear alike in all the phenomena, “ yet as far as we can discover, it appears in the

\* Vol. V. p. 63. † *Ib.* p. 87. ‡ *Ib.* p. 88. || *Ib.* p. 528. § *Ib.* p. 311.

“ greatest and least to our astonishment, and  
 “ none of them can be strained into a repug-  
 “ nancy to it—But the same cannot be said of  
 “ the moral attributes which we ascribe to the  
 “ Supreme Being according to our ideas of them,  
 “ —It cannot be disputed, and all sides agree,  
 “ that many of the phænomena are repugnant  
 “ to our ideas of goodness and justice \*. He  
 declares it as his opinion, that “ God’s natural  
 “ attributes absorb the moral †. And particu-  
 larly, that “ the moral attributes of the Supreme  
 “ Being are absorbed in his wisdom; and that  
 “ we should consider them only as different mo-  
 “ difications of this physical attribute; and must  
 “ always talk precariously and impertinently,  
 “ when we presume to apply our ideas of them to  
 “ the appearances of things ||.” And he chargeth  
 the divines “ as proceeding in all their reason-  
 “ ings about the nature, moral attributes, and  
 “ will of God, not only without regard to the  
 “ phænomena, but often in direct contradiction  
 “ to them ‡.”

This is not a matter that he treats merely in some occasional passages. The chief design of several of his fragments and essays in his fifth volume, particularly of the fourth, seventh, fortieth, forty-first, and forty-ninth, is to argue against those who assert the moral attributes of God as distinguished from his physical: Or who say, That those moral attributes, his holiness,

\* Vol. V. p. 368. † *Ib.* p. 313, 314. || *Ib.* p. 335. 453.  
 ‡ *Ib.* p. 310.

LETTER

VI.




goodness, justice and truth are the same in him, that they are in the ideas we form of those perfections; which he says, cannot be conceived *without manifest presumption and blasphemy*: Upon this doctrine he chargeth mens *false conceptions, and licentious reasonings* about the divine nature and providence. He adds, that “these *false conceptions* and *licentious reasonings* may proceed likewise from the *analogical doctrine*; which though it ascribes not to God human notions, yet ascribes to him something, whatever it be, equivalent to them\*.” He affirms, that “goodness and justice in God — are something transcendent, and of which we cannot make any true judgment; and that it is impossible we should argue with any certainty about them†. I shall only farther observe, that he brings a charge in this respect, not only against the Christian divines, but against the heathen philosophers. The reason he assigns, why they were “unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform mankind, is because they proceeded in Dr. *Clarke’s* method to argue *a priori* from the moral attributes of God, his goodness, justice, &c. which they assumed to be the same in him, that they are in our ideas||.”

By comparing these several passages together it appears, that, according to this writer, we are unable to form any idea of the moral attributes of God: For if we cannot conceive of them according to our ideas, we cannot form

\* Vol. V. p. 541. † *Ib.* p. 311. 359, 360. || *Ib.* p. 234.

any



any conception of them at all: That it is wrong LETTER  
VI.  
 to distinguish them from his physical attributes,   
 or to say they are connected with those attributes: That there is not only no such thing in God as goodness or justice as we conceive of them, but nothing in him analogous or equivalent to those qualities as they are in us, or which is fitted to produce correspondent effects: That therefore it ought not to be said of God, that he is just and good, holy and true, or that he is a lover of mankind, or is concerned for our happiness, but only that he is powerful and wise: That we can only know God's moral attributes *a posteriori* from the effects, and that many of the phenomena in nature are repugnant to those attributes, and inconsistent with them: So that it is impossible for us to argue with any certainty about them. This is the plain intention of the passages which have been cited, and others might be produced to the same purpose: Though we shall find him afterwards plainly contradicting several things which here he hath advanced.

If we consider what his reason could be for setting up an hypothesis so contrary to true Theism, for which yet he would be thought to have so great a zeal, there are two things which he appears to have had in view.

1. That we are in no case to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or to propose to imitate God in those attributes. He declares, that "the laws of nature are absurdly founded in the moral attributes of  
 " God

LETTER VI. "God\*;" *i. e.* it is absurd to talk of his justice, goodness, righteousness and truth, as giving rise to those laws, or appearing in the constitution of them. And as to the pretence of imitating the Deity in his moral excellencies, this is what he openly and avowedly condemns. This particularly is the design of the fourth of his fragments and essays in his fifth volume. He expressly asserts, that "God's moral attributes cannot be so discerned by us as to be the objects of our imitation †." He pronounces, that "it is absurd, and worse than absurd, to assert that man can imitate God, except in a sense so very remote, and so improper, that the expressions should never be used, much less such a duty recommended ‡." And that "those writers or preachers who exhort us to imitate God, must mean, not the God whom we see in his works, and in all that his providence orders; but the God who appears in their representations of him, and who is often such a God as no pious theist can acknowledge §." He declares for himself, that he dares not use *theological familiarity*, and talk of *imitating God*; and treats that doctrine as *extravagant, false, and profane* †. He says, that "by assuming to imitate God we give the strongest proof of the imperfection of our nature, whilst we neglect the real, and aspire to a mock honour, as pride, seduced by adulation, is prone to

\* Vol. V. p. 90. † *Ib.* p. 63. ‡ *Ib.* p. 62. § *Ib.* p. 64.  
 † *Ib.* p. 44. 65.

“ do ; and as religious pride, wrought up by <sup>LETTER</sup> self-conceit into enthusiasm, does above all <sup>VI.</sup> others\*.” And he mentions it as an instance of the impertinence of *Socrates’s* doctrine, that “ he conjured his auditors in the prison to make themselves as like as possible to their great exemplar, the Supreme Being ||.” Thus has this dogmatical and presumptuous author taken upon him to pass a severe and insolent censure upon that which has been the doctrine of the most excellent philosophers and moralists, and of one far superior to them all, our blessed Saviour himself. See *Matt.* v. 45. 48. *Luke* vi. 35, 36. And he has particularly instanced in God’s causing his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and his sending rain on the just and unjust, as a proof that we cannot and ought not to aspire after an imitation of him §. Though our Lord sets this goodness of providence before us as a noble pattern, to engage us to an extensive benevolence, and that we should be ready to do good even to our enemies themselves. There are indeed depths in God’s providential dispensations with regard to which we cannot pretend to imitate him, for want of knowing the reasons upon which he proceeds, but this does not hinder, but that we may and ought to endeavour to resemble him in his illustrious moral excellencies, as far as we can discern them in his works and in the revelations of his word, which in many instances we are able to do.

\* Vol. V. p. 67. || Vol. IV. p. 117, 118. § Vol. V. p. 63.

2. Another

LETTER  
VL

2. Another thing which he hath evidently in view, in denying that we can have any idea of the moral attributes of God, so as to make a true judgment of them, or to argue with any certainty about them, is to destroy the argument which is drawn from the consideration of these moral attributes, to shew the probability of a future state of retributions. For if God be perfectly good and just, this leads us to conclude that he will order it so, that in the final issue of things, a remarkable distinction shall be made between the righteous and the wicked; and that virtue shall upon the whole be crowned with its due reward, and vice meet with condign punishment: and since this is not uniformly done in this present state, it is reasonable to believe that there shall be a future state of rewards and punishments. This is a way of arguing, which, by his own acknowledgement, has been urged by some of the best and wisest men in all ages. To avoid this consequence, he will not allow that there is any such thing as justice and goodness in God according to our ideas, or any thing answering to what we call justice and goodness: and that it is presumption in us to determine what those attributes require that God should do\*. And indeed to guard against this seems to have been a principal point with his lordship. It is for this that he denies, that Providence extendeth his care to the individuals of the human race. And one of his chief prejudices against the Christian



revelation appears to me to be its setting these things in so strong a light. LETTER  
VI.

You easily perceive that this part of our author's scheme is not of a trifling nature. It is not a mere speculative error, but which, pursued to its proper consequences, must have a mighty influence on religion and morals. I shall therefore examine it distinctly; and shall first offer some general considerations concerning God's moral attributes, to shew that they must necessarily be ascribed to the supreme Being: And then shall proceed to obviate the principal objections he hath advanced: After which I shall point to the manifold inconsistencies and contradictions he hath fallen into in relation to this subject.

I shall begin with some general considerations concerning God's moral attributes.

And 1. It is essential to the idea of God, that he is the *all-perfect* Being. So our author frequently calls him, and makes it necessary for us to regard him under that notion\*. That is a remarkable declaration which he makes Vol. III. p. 299, "I know, for I can demonstrate by connecting the clearest and most distinct of my real ideas, that there is a God, a first intelligent cause of all things, whose infinite wisdom and power appear evidently in all his works, and to whom therefore I ascribe most rationally every other perfection, whether conceivable or not conceivable by me." Here he men-

\* Vol. III. p. 253.

LETTER

VI.

tions distinctly, as his manner is, God's *infinite wisdom and power*, and takes no particular notice of his goodness. But surely this must be supposed to be included, when he adds, that not only wisdom and power, but *every other perfection conceivable by us* must be most rationally ascribed to God. For is not goodness a perfection? And is it not conceivable by us? Yea, is it not the most amiable of all perfections, and that which gives a lustre and glory to all the rest? Is it possible to conceive a perfect character without it? Almighty power and infinite wisdom, if they could be supposed separated from goodness and righteousness, in the great Governor of the world, would create horror and aversion instead of love and esteem. A God destitute of justice and goodness would be such a God, as he most wrongfully represents the God of *Moses* and *St. Paul* to be, an unjust, a cruel, a partial and arbitrary Being\*.

He is sensible that in our ideas of perfection, goodness and righteousness, or his moral attributes, are necessarily included: and that consequently according to the rule he had laid down, *viz.* that it is *rational* for us to ascribe to God every perfection, whether *conceivable* or *unconceivable by us*, we ought most certainly to ascribe to him righteousness, goodness and truth. He endeavours therefore to guard against this by saying, though in plain contradiction to what he had before advanced.—“ Let us not measure his

\* Vol. V. p. 567.

“ per-

“perfections by ours. Let us not presume  
 “so much as to ascribe our perfections to him,  
 “even according to the highest conceptions we  
 “are able to form of them; though we reject  
 “every imperfection conceivable by us, when  
 “it is imputed to him†”. He observes, that  
 “the first and strongest impressions that we re-  
 “ceive of benevolence, justice, and other moral  
 “virtues, come from reflexions on ourselves  
 “and others; from what we feel in ourselves,  
 “and from what we observe in other men.  
 “These we acknowledge to be, however limited  
 “and imperfect, the excellencies of our own  
 “nature, and therefore conceiving them with-  
 “out any limitation or imperfection, we ascribe  
 “them to the Divine.” But he says, “a very  
 “short analysis of the excellencies of our own  
 “nature will be sufficient to shew, that they  
 “cannot be applied from man to God without  
 “profaneness, nor from God to man without  
 “the most shameful absurdity\*.” It will be  
 easily acknowledged, that we cannot ascribe any  
 of those qualities in our nature, which necessarily  
 connote imperfection, to God in a literal and  
 proper sense; but to say that we ought not to  
 ascribe those, which we cannot but look upon  
 as the noblest excellencies and perfections of an  
 intelligent Being, and of which we clearly discern  
 the traces and resemblances in our own nature,  
 to the infinitely perfect Being, at the same time  
 taking care to remove every imperfection with  
 which they are attended in us and our fellow-

† Vol. III. p. 558.

\* Vol. V. 88, 89.

LETTER VI. creatures, is highly absurd, and a manifest contradiction to the common sense of mankind. It is to say, that we are to conceive of God as the infinitely perfect Being, and yet we are not to ascribe to him those excellencies which we cannot possibly avoid regarding as necessarily included in the idea of an infinite perfection. Nor is this, as he is pleased to represent it, a making man the *original*, and God only a *copy*;\* or, as he elsewhere expresseth it, a supposing God to be no more than an *infinite man*†. This argument, if it may be called so, is only a playing upon words. The word *man* carries in it the idea of a finite, imperfect, created being. And therefore to call God an infinite man has a very odd sound. But if the meaning only be, that as man is an intelligent being, so God is infinite intelligence; and as man has moral dispositions, the imperfect seeds and principles of goodness, justness, benevolence, God hath all these in the highest possible degree of eminency, without any imperfection and defect; what is there in this unworthy of the supreme and absolutely perfect Being? It is true that, as he observes, *we do not know the manner of his being* ||, but as this by his own acknowledgement is no argument against ascribing to him wisdom and power, so neither is it against our ascribing to him justice and goodness. He there asserts, that “ we rise from the knowledge of ourselves, and of the other works of God, to a knowledge of his existence, and of his wis-

\* Vol. V. p. 87.    † *Ib.* p. 310.    || *Ib.* p. 88.



“dom and power which we call infinite.” And LETTER VI. may it not equally be said, that we rise from the consideration of his works, and the illustrious displays of beneficent goodness to be found there, and from the knowledge of the moral sentiments in our own breasts, and which we cannot but approve, to the knowledge of his goodness, and moral excellencies? And since, by the very constitution of our minds, we cannot help regarding them as perfections, we are naturally led to ascribe them in the supreme degree to the *all-perfect* Being. And to say, that when we do so, we make ourselves the original, and him only the copy, is a strange misrepresentation. For in that case we rise from the imperfect traces and lineaments of those excellencies in our own souls, or which we discern in others, to the supreme goodness and benevolence, of which all human and created goodness is but a very faint and imperfect copy. And what can be more reasonable, than to conclude that he must be infinitely good and just, and true, who made us capable of discerning and feeling the amiableness and excellency of those moral dispositions and qualities; and who hath spread such beauty and order, and such a profusion of blessings throughout this vast system?

Again, the moral attributes of God may be farther argued from this, that they are really inseparable from infinite wisdom and intelligence: And since wisdom could not be perfect without goodness and justice, these moral attributes must

LETTER VI. be ascribed to the supreme Being as well as wisdom, which our author every-where ascribes to him. We may as reasonably suppose him without the one as the other. As there are innumerable things which shew his wisdom, so there are which demonstrate his goodness and benignity. And if there are several appearances which we find it hard to reconcile to our ideas of goodness, so there are which seem not to be consistent with wisdom. And the answer is the same in both cases, that it is owing to our ignorance, and the narrowness of our views. And we shall soon find our author in effect acknowledging this. Power and wisdom without goodness and righteousness are so far from giving us a proper idea of an all-perfect Being, that it is the idea of a very imperfect one. This writer himself observes, that “if God be infinitely wise, he  
 “ always knows and always does that which is  
 “ fittest to be done: To chuse the best end, and  
 “ to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wisdom\*.” And accordingly he asserts, that the wisdom of God always determineth him to do that *which is fittest upon the whole*. And this necessarily supposeth an universal rectitude of his nature. It includes both a perfect unerring knowlege of what is fittest and best, and a disposition and determination to act accordingly, and to do what is, all things considered, best and fittest to be done. And this is really to acknowledge God’s moral attributes.

\* Vol. V. p. 332.

For, as our author observes, "that which is  
 " fittest to be done is always just and good §." So  
 that God's wisdom is necessarily supposed to be  
 connected with his justice and goodness, as well as  
 they with his wisdom; and a regard to both is  
 comprehended in chusing what is fittest to be  
 done. Wisdom separated from justice and good-  
 ness would not be true wisdom, which always  
 includes the worthiest ends and properest means,  
 but Craft, which is not a real perfection, but the  
 contrary.

LETTER  
 VI.  


This writer shews that he is sensible of this,  
 when he asserts, that God's moral attributes are  
 only "different modifications of his wisdom;  
 " and are barely names that we give to various  
 " manifestations of the infinite wisdom of one  
 " simple uncompound Being". And he blames  
 the divines for supposing that "they are in him,  
 " what they are in us, distinct affections, dispo-  
 " sitions and habitudes\*." He says, that "after  
 " all that has been said to prove a necessary con-  
 " nexion between his physical and moral at-  
 " tributes, we may observe them in his wisdom||."  
 And that "if they are so intimately connected  
 " with his power and wisdom, and so much the  
 " same in nature, that they cannot be separated  
 " in the exercise of them, in this case his natural  
 " attributes absorb the moral†." But what are  
 we to understand by absorb? May they not  
 be intimately connected, and yet be of distinct  
 consideration? Are not the divine power and

§ Vol. V. p. 313. \* *Ib.* p. 335. || *Ib.* p. 88. † *Ib.* p. 313.

LETTER VI. wisdom intimately connected? Can they ever be separated in the exercise? Is his power ever a blind power, destitute of wisdom and intelligence? Or, is his wisdom an impotent wisdom, destitute of power? Yet he owns the ideas of power and wisdom in God to be distinct, though they are neither of them really distinguished from his essence. He is indeed pleased to pass a censure upon the divines for *parcelling out a divine moral nature into various attributes like the human* ‡. And he sometimes seems to find fault with the distinguishing any attributes at all in God. He says, that “since the wisdom of God is as much God as the will of God, and the will as the wisdom, it is absurd to distinguish them: That it is something worse to reason about the divine, as we do about the human intellect, and to divide and parcel out the former upon the plan of the latter. Since the will of God is not like that of man, dark and liable to be seduced, why are we led to conclude that a superior faculty is necessary to determine it, as the judgment of reason does, or should, determine that of man?” Yet he immediately after distinguishes between the *will* and *knowledge* of God, and supposes it necessary to distinguish them *to be* (as he expresses it) *a little more intelligible* §. and elsewhere he talks of the *rule which infinite wisdom prescribes to infinite power* †. And all along throughout his essays he speaks

‡ Vol. V. p. 453.

§ *Ib.* p. 5.

† Vol. III. p. 53.



of wisdom and power as distinct attributes of God. The one therefore does not, to use his expression, *absorb* the other, though they are not separated in the exercise. This shews that perfections may be intimately connected without being absorbed, or, in other words, confounded one with another. And therefore it is no argument that there are no such distinct attributes as justice or righteousness and goodness, because they are intimately and inseparably connected with his power and wisdom. On the contrary, this supposes that there are such attributes. For it would be absurd to talk of their being connected with his wisdom, or of their being to be *observed* in his wisdom, if there were no such qualities, or attributes. And since, as Lord *Bolingbroke* himself elsewhere acknowledgeth, *we must speak of God, after the manner of men*\*, if we speak of these qualities at all, we must speak of them as distinct attributes.

Let us now consider our author's objections.

1. He urges, that "the moral as well as physical attributes of God can only be known *a posteriori*. They must be discerned in the works of God, and in the conduct of Providence. And it is evident they are not, cannot be so discerned in them, as to be the objects of our imitation †." "Every thing shews the power and wisdom of God conformably to our ideas of wisdom and power

\* Vol. V. p. 468. † *Ib.* p. 63.

LETTER VI. “ in the physical world and in the moral, but  
 “ every thing does not shew in like manner  
 “ the justice and goodness of God, conformably  
 “ to our ideas of these attributes in either\*.  
 “ None of the phenomena can be strained into  
 “ a repugnancy to the divine wisdom, but it  
 “ cannot be disputed, that many of them are  
 “ repugnant to our ideas of goodness and ju-  
 “ stice†.” Some other passages to the same pur-  
 pose were mentioned above, which I need not here  
 repeat. In opposition to this it may be observed,  
 that, as was before hinted, the characters of good-  
 ness and benignity are conspicuous in the consti-  
 tution of things, as well as of wisdom and  
 power. And if there are several particular phe-  
 nomena not conformable to our ideas of good-  
 ness and righteousness, there are also several ap-  
 pearances not conformable to our ideas of wis-  
 dom; and the reasons and designs of which do  
 not appear. It is well known, that many are  
 the objections which the atheists have made  
 against the wisdom of God, as appearing in the  
 constitution both of the natural and moral world.  
 It is his own observation, that “ we must be pre-  
 “ pared to meet with several appearances, which  
 “ we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile  
 “ to the ideas we endeavour to form of the di-  
 “ vine perfection. If it be true, that infinite  
 “ wisdom and power created and govern the  
 “ universe, it cannot but follow that some of  
 “ the phenomena may be proportionable, and

\* Vol. V. p. 311. † *Ib.* p. 368.

“ that

“ that others must be disproportionable to our and LETTER  
 “ to every other finite understanding \*.” He VI.  
 very properly exposes the absurdity of the atheists  
 in arguing against the existence, attributes, and  
 providence of God, from the difficulties relat-  
 ing to them. And observes, that “ these dif-  
 “ ficulties do not embarrass the theist — And  
 “ instead of being surprized to find them, he  
 “ would be surprized not to find them — That  
 “ there must be many phenomena both physical  
 “ and moral, for which he can, and for which  
 “ he cannot account — And that there are  
 “ secrets of the divine nature and œconomy,  
 “ which human reason cannot penetrate †.”  
 The difficulties therefore relating to the divine  
 goodness are no reason for not acknowledging  
 that goodness, any more than the difficulties re-  
 lating to the divine wisdom are a good reason  
 against acknowledging the wisdom of God. We  
 may here apply his own way of arguing.  
 “ The power of executing (says he) is seen in  
 “ every instance; and though we cannot discern  
 “ the wisdom of contrivance and direction in  
 “ every instance, yet we see them in so many,  
 “ that it becomes the highest absurdity not to  
 “ acknowledge them in all.” And he takes no-  
 tice of the folly of atheists in objecting against  
 it, whereby they only shew their own igno-  
 rance. — He adds, that “ the wisdom of  
 “ God is not so often discernible by us as the  
 “ power of God, nor the goodness as the wis-

\* Vol. V. p. 365. † Vol. III. p. 186, 187.


LETTER VI. “ dom. But a multitude of the phenomena be-  
 “ ing conformable *to our ideas of goodness*, we  
 “ may reason about it as we did just now about  
 “ the divine wisdom\* ;” *i. e.* that though we  
 cannot discern the goodness of God according to  
 our ideas in every thing, yet we see it in so many,  
 that it would be the highest absurdity not to ac-  
 knowlege it in all, where he seems to me plainly  
 to give up the point, and to assert that we ought  
 to acknowlege the goodness of God, even, ac-  
 cording to our ideas of goodness, as well as his  
 wisdom, to be an attribute belonging to the  
 Supreme Being: And that this may be justly ar-  
 gued from his works.

But let us proceed to consider some other of  
 his objections:

He argues against ascribing moral attributes,  
 or the excellencies of our nature to God, be-  
 cause we cannot ascribe to him fortitude and  
 temperance. He asketh “ How can we deduce  
 “ fortitude from the attributes of God, or ascribe  
 “ this virtue to him, who can endure no pain,  
 “ nor be exposed to any danger? How tempe-  
 “ rance, when it would be the most horrid blas-  
 “ phemy, to suppose him subject to any human  
 “ appetites and passions, and much more to  
 “ some so inordinate as to require a particular  
 “ virtue to restrain and govern them? I might  
 “ bring many more instances of the same kind.  
 “ But he who will not be convinced by these,  
 “ how absurdly the laws of nature are founded

\* Vol. V. p. 335.



“ by some writers in the moral attributes of LETTER VI.  
 “ God, will be convinced by none \*.” He   
 seems to have a good opinion of this way of arguing, for he urges it more than once †. But though fortitude, as it signifies a bearing up under evils and sufferings, and temperance, as it signifies the restraining and governing the appetites and passions, cannot be properly ascribed to God, because they necessarily connote the being liable to evils and imperfections, it doth not follow that therefore righteousness and goodness, and universal benevolence, which imply no such imperfection, and are the noblest excellencies of an intelligent nature, that we can possibly conceive, may not be applied to the Supreme and Absolutely - perfect Being: And as to fortitude and temperance, though they cannot be properly ascribed to God, no more than piety and submission and resignation to the divine will, which are eminent human virtues; yet they are the objects of the divine approbation, and our obligation to them may be justly argued and deduced from God’s moral attributes, from his holiness and the rectitude of his nature, which causeth him to delight in moral beauty and order, and to require that his reasonable creatures should act in a manner becoming the excellent faculties he hath given them; and that they should maintain that temper and conduct which tendeth to the true per-

\* Vol. V. p. 90. † *Ib.* p. 311.

LETTER VI. perfection and happiness of their natures, which these virtues manifestly do.

He farther objects, that “our ideas of the  
 “divine attributes must necessarily be inadequate, both on account of the infinite distance between the divine and human nature, and on account of the numberless and to us unknown relations, respectively to all which the divine providence acts; which, if we did know them, we should be unable to compare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of the divine perfections would not be discernible by us——That therefore we are very incompetent judges of the moral attributes of God, and of what they require God should do in the government of the world.——Nor can we make any true judgment, or argue with any certainty about them,” as he endeavours to prove from the authority of *St. Paul*, and *Dr. Barrow* \*. This only proves what will be easily allowed, that we cannot comprehend or see the whole extent of the divine proceedings; and that he may in many cases have reasons for his proceedings which we are not acquainted with; but does not prove, that there is no such thing as goodness or righteousness in God according to our ideas of them, nor any thing equivalent to them; or that we can in no case argue from what his goodness and righteousness require, nor judge of the equity of his proceedings. Although the Scriptures often speak of

\* Vol. V. p. 359. 362.

God's ways of providence as above human comprehension, yet they also represent him as sometimes appealing to men themselves concerning the equity of his proceedings. Our author indeed represents this as an absurdity, but he does not prove it so, or shew that there is any thing in it unworthy of the most wise and righteous and benevolent Governor of the world. Will it follow, that because there are some difficult cases concerning which we cannot judge, that therefore we cannot judge in any case at all? We may in some cases safely argue from our ideas of the divine goodness and justice; *e. g.* that he will order it so, that a remarkable difference shall be made upon the whole between good and bad men; and that virtue shall be rewarded, and vice and wickedness punished. Will any man say, that we cannot safely conclude from the goodness and justice of the Supreme Being, that he will not suffer or appoint an innocent creature to be eternally miserable? He observes, speaking of God's knowledge, power, and wisdom, that "though we cannot frame  
" full and adequate ideas of them, it will not  
" follow that we have, properly speaking, no  
" knowledge at all of his attributes, nor of the  
" manner in which they are exercised—That  
" our ideas of divine intelligence and wisdom,  
" may be neither fantastic nor false, and yet  
" God's manner of knowing may be very dif-  
" ferent from ours\*." In like manner it may

LETTER  
VI.  
~~~~~

* Vol. V. p. 524, 525.

LETTER VI. be said concerning God's moral attributes, his justice and goodness, that though we cannot frame full and adequate ideas of them, it will not follow that we have, properly speaking, no knowlege of them at all, and of the manner in which they are exercised. Our ideas of them are neither false nor fantastick, though in many instances they may be exercised in a way different from our apprehension. To this may be applied what he saith against Archbishop *King*, that "though we have not a direct knowlege of
 " the nature of God by archetypal ideas, yet we
 " are not reduced to know nothing of him ex-
 " cept by analogy. It is a real knowlege, and
 " may be said to be direct, if we may be allowed
 " to call any knowlege by demonstration di-
 " rect*."

Another argument urged by this writer to shew, that the divines are in the wrong to talk of God's infinite goodness and justice as of his wisdom and power, is this; that "the latter
 " preserve their nature without any conceivable
 " bounds, and the former must cease to be what
 " they are, unless we conceive them bounded.
 " Their nature implies necessarily a limitation
 " in the exercise of them ||." In answer to this, it may be observed, that God's wisdom and power considered in themselves, and as they are in God, are infinite, so also are his goodness and justice. But considered relatively in the exercise of them as terminated in the creature, the

one may be said to be limited as well as the other; *i. e.* the effects of neither of them are properly infinite. Infinite power and wisdom, as exercised on the creature, produce finite and limited effects, so doth infinite goodness and justice. But still considered as qualities and attributes of the divine essence, they are infinite, of an eminent and transcendent nature, and would be really in God, though there were no creature formed. He did not begin to be good, when the creatures began to exist, though then the exercise of goodness, under the direction of his wisdom, respecting the creatures, began.

His other objections proceed all upon a gross misrepresentation of the sentiments of those whom he hath thought fit to oppose. He chargeth Dr. *Clarke* with asserting, that justice and goodness, and the rest of the moral attributes, are in God just what they are in our *imperfect, unsteady, complex ideas*; and that the rule according to which God exerciseth those attributes, *viz.* the nature and reason of things, is obvious to the understanding of all intelligent beings*. This is not true, if understood of the whole nature and reason of things in all its vast extent: Nor has that learned divine any-where asserted that it is so.

Again, he represents the divines as asserting, that "the will of God is not determined by the "harmonious concurrence of all his attributes," and that "his goodness and justice do not act in

* Vol. V. p. 252.

" a con-

LETTER VI. *"a concurrence with his wisdom *."* He charges them with maintaining, that "goodness in God is the only directing and governing principle, and not wisdom: And that wisdom ought to contrive and power to execute under this direction." And he argues, that "if it were so, the happiness of man ought to be proportionable to the goodness of God, that is, infinite." And in opposition to this he asserts, that "wisdom ought to be deemed the directing principle of divine conduct †." Nor will any divine deny that wisdom is the directing principle. They all plead for the harmonious concurrence of the divine attributes, though they are not for confounding those attributes. Goodness in God is not to be regarded as a blind instinct, which necessarily acteth at all times, and in every instance, to the utmost extent of its capacity, and to the highest possible degree; but as a most wise goodness, *i. e.* a goodness which is always in conjunction with, and under the direction of infinite wisdom. For goodness without distinction or discernment could scarce be accounted a virtue or a perfection. Such a notion of the divine goodness would be dishonourable to God, and of ill consequence to the interests of religion and virtue in the world. But his goodness is that of a most holy and understanding mind, and is always exercised in such a way as seemeth most fit to his infinite wisdom, which governeth

* Vol. V. p. 313; 342. † *Ib.* p. 341.

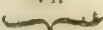
the outward effects of it, and appointeth when, LETTER VI. where, and how, it shall be communicated. We are not merely to fix our views on goodness and benevolence, in considering what God may do or may not do with regard to the happiness of his creatures; but to take in every consideration, that of his wisdom, his justice, his holiness and righteousness, and the majesty of his government.

He frequently accuseth the divines, and even the antient theists, for supposing that God made man for this end to communicate happiness to him. But then that he may more effectually expose this notion, he claps in the word *only*, as if they maintained, that God had no other end in view in creating man, but to make him happy to the utmost possible degree, to give him an *happiness without alloy*, as he expresseth it, and to *make him not only moderately, but immoderately happy in the world* *. It is thus that he thinks fit to represent their sense. And he says, This is an *hypothesis which the phenomena contradict* †. But though it cannot reasonably be denied, that according to the best conceptions we can form, one principal motive in God's making reasonable beings, was to communicate happiness to them, yet I think we do not know enough of God, nor have a sufficiently comprehensive view of things, and of the reasons an infinite mind might have for his proceedings, to pronounce confidently, that he had, and could

* Vol. V. p. 345, 392, 421. † *Ib.* p. 345.

LETTER VI. have, no other reason or motive. It may well be supposed, that in bringing this vast universe and the various orders of beings in it into existence, he had in view the exercise and display of his own glorious perfections, not merely of any one but of all his perfections, his majesty and greatness, his wisdom, power, holiness, and goodness, in conjunction. This is an end worthy of God, as far as he can be said to propose an end to himself. And when it is said, that he made his reasonable creatures with a design to communicate happiness to them, it must be understood thus, that he had it in view to make them happy, in such a way, in such measures and degrees, in such times, seasons, and proportions, as should seem fit to his infinite wisdom, and should be most worthy of him, and becoming his own glorious perfections. His end in creating them was not absolutely to make every individual of them happy at all events, however they should behave, but conditionally to make them happy in the right use and improvement of their own powers, and in such a way as is consistent with moral agency and government, and becoming his own infinite wisdom, goodness, righteoulness, and purity.

It is farther with a view to expose the doctrine of the divines relating to the goodness of God, that he represents it as their general sentiment, that all things were made merely for the sake of man; that this vast universal system was formed for him alone: And he sets himself to shew,
as

as he might easily do, the absurdity of supposing LETTER
VI.
the whole universe to have been made merely 
for some minute part of it *. This particularly is
the subject of the 45th and 46th of his frag-
ments and essays. But it is observable, that he
himself, after having abused the divines for sup-
posing that God made man to communicate
happiness to him, expressly asserts, that “ God
“ has made us happy, and has put it into our
“ power to make ourselves happier by a due use
“ of our reason, which leads us to the practice
“ of moral virtue, and all the duties of so-
“ ciety †.” “ That we are obliged to our
“ Creator for a certain rule, and sufficient means
“ of arriving at happiness, and have none to
“ blame but ourselves, when we fail of it ‡.”
“ That God made us to be happy here — He
“ may make us happier in another system of
“ being.—That there is even in this world
“ much more good than evil, and the present
“ state of mankind is happy in it §.” “ And
“ that the end of the human state is human
“ happiness ||.”

You are, I doubt not, by this time prepared
for what I proposed to shew in the last place,
the contradictions and inconsistencies our author
hath fallen into in treating of this subject. I
suppose you to bear in mind the severe censures
he hath passed upon the divines for pretending
to connect the physical and moral attributes of

* Vol. V. p. 330.
§ *Ib.* p. 391, 392.

† *Ib.* p. 384.
|| *Ib.* p. 544.

‡ *Ib.* p. 388.

LETTER
VI.

God, and for ascribing to him moral attributes, justice and goodness, according to our ideas. And now I desire you to compare the passages already produced with those that follow.

God shews us our duty, “ by which we stand
 “ in the relation of subjects and servants to a
 “ gracious and beneficent Lord and Master,
 “ who gave us laws neither captious nor ambi-
 “ guous, and who commands us nothing which
 “ it is not our interest to perform *.” He here supposes it to be a thing evident from the law of nature, that we stand in a relation to God as our *gracious and beneficent Lord and Master*, who has our interest and happiness in view in the very laws which he enjoins. And is not this plainly to ascribe goodness to him, even according to our ideas of goodness? And elsewhere he represents it, as if we could not ask more of a *beneficent Creator*, than he hath done for us †. He says, “ The Theist acknowledges whatever
 “ God has done to be just and good in itself,
 “ though it does not appear such in every in-
 “ stance, conformably to his ideas of justice
 “ and goodness. He imputes the difference to
 “ the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect
 “ of the divine attributes. — Where he sees
 “ them, he owns them explicitly ; where he
 “ does not see them, he pronounces nothing
 “ about them. He is as far from denying them,”
 (*i. e.* from denying the justice and goodness of God) “ as he is from denying the wisdom and

* Vol. V. p. 97.

† *Ib.* p. 481.

“ power

“ power of God *.” The most orthodox di-
vine could hardly express himself more fully
on this head, than Lord *Bolingbroke* has here
done. To the same purpose he introduces a
meditation or soliloquy of a sincere and devout
Theist, in which he represents him as saying,
among other things, “ Man enjoys numberless
“ benefits by the fitness of his nature to this
“ constitution, unasked, unmerited, freely be-
“ stowed. The *wisdom and goodness* of God
“ are therefore manifest. May I enjoy thank-
“ fully the benefits bestowed on me by the di-
“ vine liberality: may I receive the evils to
“ which I am exposed patiently, nay wil-
“ lingly †.”

But what deserves particularly to be remarked
is, that whereas he represents the ascribing good-
ness and justice to God according to our ideas,
to be what gives great advantage to the Atheists
with regard to the original of evil; as if he
thought it impossible to reconcile the evil that is
in the world with God's moral attributes, and
the supposition of his being good and righteous
and holy as well as powerful and wise; he has
taken great pains to confute his own arguments.
For not a few of his fragments and essays in his
fifth volume are taken up in endeavouring to
remove and answer that objection, and to shew
that the evil there is in the present constitution
of things in this world, is reconcilable to the

* Vol. V. p. 311, 312.
l. III. p. 358.

† *Ib.* p. 338, 339.— See also

LETTER ^{VI.} justice and goodness of God, even according to the ideas we form of them *. He undertakes to defend the *goodness* of God against the Atheists and divines †. And having, as he pretends, done this, he proceeds to vindicate the *justice* and *righteousness* of God *against the same confederates* ‡. Thus the same author, who had used his utmost efforts to shew, in opposition to the divines, that moral attributes, particularly justice and goodness, ought not to be ascribed to God according to the ideas we conceive of them, and that we cannot form any judgment concerning them, takes upon him afterwards to vindicate those very attributes against the divines, who, he pretends, are for destroying them. So strangely inconsistent is this writer's scheme, that on the one hand, with a view to invalidate the argument for a state of future retributions drawn from the moral attributes of God, he endeavours to take away those attributes, or confound them with the physical, and to shew that there is no such thing as goodness or justice in God according to our ideas, nor any thing equivalent to them; and that the phenomena are repugnant to those attributes: And on the other hand, with the same view of weakening or destroying the argument for a future state from those attributes, he sets himself to prove that the present state of things is sufficiently conformable to our ideas

* See Vol. V. Frag. 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54.

† Vol. V. p. 337.

‡ *Ib.* p. 395.

of the divine justice and goodness, and that these ^{LETTER} attributes are so fully exercised or displayed here, ^{VI.} that there is no need for any further manifestation or display of them hereafter.

I shall only produce one passage more, and it is a very remarkable one. Towards the conclusion of his last volume, when he pretends to draw a line of separation between natural and artificial theology, he observes that by that, *viz.* natural theology, “ we are taught to acknowledge and adore the infinite wisdom and power of God, manifested in every part of his creation, and ascribe *goodness* and *justice* to him where-ever he intended that we should so ascribe them, that is, where-ever either his works, or the dispensations of his providence, do as necessarily communicate these notions to our minds, as those of wisdom and power are communicated to us in the whole extent of both. Where-ever they are not so communicated, we may assume very reasonably, that it is on motives strictly conformable to all the divine attributes, and therefore to goodness and justice, though unknown to us, from whom so many circumstances, with a relation to which the divine providence acts, must be often concealed: or, we may resolve all into the wisdom of God, and not presume to account for them morally *.” The last part of this passage hath a reference to his scheme of resolving all into the divine wisdom.

* Vol. V. p. 527.

LETTER VI. But you cannot but observe here, that after his repeated invectives against the divines, and against artificial theology, for ascribing moral attributes to God, justice and goodness, according to our ideas of them, he has in effect here acknowledged all that the divines themselves teach. They believe, that God is always good and just, though they do not pretend to account for the exercise of goodness and justice in every particular instance: But that enough we know to convince us of both: The notions of which, this writer himself here owns to be in many instances, at least, necessarily communicated to us from his works: And surely then we should endeavour to resemble him in these his moral perfections, as far as we know them.

Before I conclude this letter, I shall take some notice, because I shall not afterwards have so proper an opportunity for it, of what he hath observed concerning eternal ideas in God, and concerning the eternal reasons and fitnesses of things.

He finds great fault with Dr. *Cudworth*, Dr. *Clarke*, and others, for talking of ideas in God, as if they supposed his manner of knowing to be exactly the same with ours; which certainly was far from their intention. He pronounces, that “the doctrine of eternal ideas in the divine mind has been much abused by those who are on the delirium of metaphysical theology. It cannot be understood in a literal sense. And he thinks such a way of talking is profane as
“ well

“ well as presumptuous ; and that it is silly too, LETTER VI.
 “ and mere cant *.” He has several observations, which are for the most part very just, to shew that God’s manner of knowing is very different from ours, and that he does not know by the help or intervention of ideas as we do †. I need not take particular notice of those observations, which contain little in them, that will not be acknowledged by those whom he has thought fit to oppose. The rash and improper use of the word ideas, as applied to God, hath no doubt led to mistakes, and to wrong and unwarrantable ways of expression : As any one must be convinced, that knows what contentions there have been in the schools about the divine ideas, which have given rise to arrogant and foolish questions, scarce consistent with the veneration that is due to the supreme incomprehensible Being. Yet the modest use of that expression is not to be too rigidly censured. Our author himself, who blames it so much in others, hath on several occasions fallen into the same manner of expression himself. Thus he observes, that “ it might be determined in the *divine ideas*, that there should be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the universe ‡.” And he repeats it again, that this “ appeared necessary or fit in *the divine ideas*, that is, to speak more rationally, to the supreme divine reason or intention §.” Where

* Vol. III. p. 356. † *Ib.* p. 355, 356, 357. Vol. V. p. 35, 36, 37, 38. ‡ *Ib.* p. 337. § *Ib.* p. 305.

LETTER VI. he useth the term *divine ideas* as equivalent to the *divine reason and intention*, though he thinks the latter more proper. He elsewhere declares, that “the ideas of God, if we may ascribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are those of man *.” And in one of his most celebrated pieces published in his own life time, he saith, that “God in his *eternal ideas*, for we are able to conceive no other manner of knowing, has prescribed to himself that rule by which he governs the universe he created †.” Here he not only ascribes ideas to God, but *eternal ideas*, by which God hath prescribed to himself a rule for his governing the world. This rule he there explaineth to be “a fitness arising from the various natures, and more various relations of things, in the system which he hath constituted.” Which fitness he there supposeth to have been known to God in his *eternal ideas*. And yet he hath frequently inveighed against Dr. *Clarke*, for speaking of the eternal reasons and relations of things. This particularly is the subject of the second, fifty-eighth, and fifty-ninth of his fragments and essays in the fifth volume of his works. He treats that learned divine, as if he maintained, that these reasons and fitnesses of things, were real natures, existing independently of God, and co-eternal with him. And yet he himself, speaking of Dr. *Cudworth* and others,

* Vol. V. p. 344.
Vol. III. of his works, p. 52.

† See idea of a patriot king in

observeth

observeth that when they talk of eternal ideas^{LETTER VI.} and essences independent on the will of God, "they do not mean by these eternal independent natures, any natures at all, but such intelligible essences and *rationes* of things, as are objects of the mind*." And it is his own observation, that "God knew from all eternity every system that he created in time — the relations things should bear — and the proportions they should have †" — and that "to the divine omniscience the future is like the present;" and therefore he thinks it improper to talk of *prescience* in God. He represents it as "a great truth, that the whole series of things is at all times actually present to the divine mind: so that we may say properly, that God knows things, because they are actual to him ‡." According to his own representation therefore it may be justly said, that all the fitnesses and relations of things were from the beginning actually present to the divine mind. And he accordingly declares, that God was *determined* by his *infinite wisdom* to *proceed with his creatures in all the exertions of his power, according to the fitness of things* ||. Or in other words, as he elsewhere expresseth it, God does *not govern by mere arbitrary will*; but always *does that which is fittest to be done*; and which he from all eternity saw would be fittest to be done. And this seems to be all that

* Vol. V. p. 15.

† *Ib.* p. 7.

‡ *Ib.* p. 457, 458.

|| *Ib.* p. 435.

LETTER ^{VI.} is really intended by those who speak of the eternal reasons and fitnesses of things. Whether therefore the manner of expression be strictly proper or not, this writer had no right to pass so severe a censure upon it as he has done, since it comes so near to his own.

But I believe you will think it is time to quit this subject; and pass on to some other things in Lord *Bolingbroke's* works, which relate to things of no small importance, and which will deserve a particular consideration.

I am Yours, &c.



LETTER VII.

The doctrine of divine providence nearly connected with that of the existence of God. Lord Bolingbroke's account of it considered. He acknowledges a general, but denies a particular providence, and asserts that providence relates only to collective bodies, but doth not extend to individuals. The true notion of providence stated. What we are to understand by a particular providence. The reasonableness of believing it, and the great importance of it shewn. The contrary scheme is absurd and inconsistent with itself, and of the worst consequence to mankind. The objections against a particular providence examined. Concerning occasional interpositions. They are not properly miraculous, nor deviations from the general laws of providence, but applications of those laws to particular cases. To acknowledge such interpositions is not to suppose the world governed by miracles, nor to introduce an universal Theocracy like the Jewish. Angels may be employed in particular cases as ministers of providence.

S I R,

THE doctrine of divine providence hath a very near connection with that of the existence of the Deity, and is no less necessary
to

LETTER ^{VII.} to be believed. To acknowledge a God that brought all things into existence and yet to deny that he afterwards taketh care of the creatures he hath made, or that he exerciseth any inspection over them, as a moral governor, or concerneth himself about their actions, and the events relating to them, is, with regard to all the purposes of religion, the same thing as not to acknowledge a God at all. It is one great excellency of the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, that they every-where reach us to have a constant regard to the divine providence, as presiding over the universal system, and all the orders of beings in it, and as in a particular manner exercising a continual care and inspection towards mankind, observing all their actions, and ordering and disposing the events relating to them with infinite wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. But this doctrine of providence, which, one should think, ought mightily to recommend the Scriptures to every good mind, seems to have been one principal ground of the prejudices which Lord *Bolingbroke* hath conceived against those sacred writings. It is true, that he frequently affecteth to shew a zeal for divine providence: He sets up as an advocate for its proceedings against the divines, who, he pretends, join with the Atheists in misrepresenting and opposing it. But if his scheme be narrowly examined, it will appear that notwithstanding his fair pretences, he doth not acknowledge a providence in that sense in which



which it is most useful and necessary to believe it.

He declares, that “in asserting the justice of providence, he has chosen rather to insist on the most visible and undeniable course of a general providence, than to assume a dispensation of particular providences*.” He observes, that “the world is governed by laws, which the Creator imposed on the physical and moral systems, when he willed them into existence, and which must be in force as long as they last; and any change in which would be a change in the systems themselves. These laws are invariable, but they are general, and from this generality what we call contingencies arise†.” “The course of things rolls on through a vast variety of contingent events; for such they are to our apprehension; according to the first impressions of motion that were given it by the first Mover, and under the direction of an universal providence‡.” “As to the brute animals, they are left under the direction of instinct: And as to men, God has given his human creatures the materials of physical and moral happiness in the physical and moral constitution of things. He has given them faculties and powers, necessary to collect and apply these materials, and to carry on the work—This the Creator has done for us. What we shall do for ourselves, he has left to the freedom of our elections.

* Vol. V. p. 414. † *Ib.* p. 416. ‡ *Ib.* p. 379.

“ This

LETTER
VII.

“ This is the plan of divine wisdom: And we
 “ know nothing more particular, and indeed
 “ nothing more at all, of the dispensations of
 “ providence than this*.” This then is all the
 part he allows to providence in the moral world,
 that God has given man reason, and, as he else-
 where observes, passion §, and has left him to
 the freedom of his own will, without ever con-
 cerning himself farther about the individuals of
 the human race, or exercising any inspection
 over men’s moral conduct, in order to the re-
 warding the good, or punishing the bad. That
 this is his intention is manifest by comparing this
 with other passages. He expressly declares, that
 “ it is plain from the whole course of God’s
 “ providence, that he regards his human crea-
 “ tures collectively, not individually, how wor-
 “ thy soever every one of them deems himself
 “ to be a particular object of the divine care †.”
 This of God’s regarding men collectively, not
 individually, is what he frequently repeats; and
 it appears to be a principal point in his scheme.
 With the same view he declares, that the sanc-
 tions of the law of nature relate not to indivi-
 duals, but to collective bodies ‡. He finds fault
 with the notion, which, he says, obtained among
 the heathens, “ that God was constantly atten-
 “ tive to the affairs of men §§. And asserts,
 that “ God may foresee, or rather see, all the
 “ most contingent events that happen in the

* Vol. V. p. 473, 474.
 † *Ib.* p. 90. §§ *Ib.* p. 211.

§ *Ib.* p. 417.† *Ib.* p. 431.

“ course of his general providence; but not^{LETTER VII.}
 “ provide for particular cases, nor determine
 “ the existence of particular men *.” He ob-
 serves, that “ the divine providence has provi-
 “ ded means to punish individuals, by directing
 “ men to form societies, and to establish laws,
 “ in the execution of which civil magistrates are
 “ the vicegerents of providence. And when
 “ the immorality of individuals becomes that
 “ of an whole society, then the judgments of
 “ God follow, and men are punished collect-
 “ ively in the course of a general providence *.”
 So that he allows no punishments by providence
 for individuals, but those which are executed
 by the civil magistrates. And if a man can
 escape punishment from them, he has nothing
 to fear from God, except the whole community
 be as bad as himself. And even then the pu-
 nishment may not happen in that or the next
 age, till he shall be no more.

Our author indeed sometimes declares, that
 “ he neither affirms nor denies particular pro-
 “ vidences †.” And after having observed, that
 there is little credit to be given to the reports
 concerning particular acts of providence, wrought
 on particular occasions, he adds, that “ yet he
 “ will not presume to deny, that there have
 “ been any such §.” He makes the same de-
 claration afterwards towards the end of his
 book ||. But notwithstanding these professions,

* Vol. V. p. 462.
 † *Ib.* p. 546.

‡ *Ib.* p. 413, 414.


§ *Ib.* 420.

LETTER VII. it is a point that he hath very much laboured, to destroy the belief of a particular providence. This is the exprefs design of feveral of his fragments and effays in the fifth volume of his works; especially of the fifty-fifth, fifty-sixth, fifty-seventh, sixty-second, and sixty-fourth, of those Effays; in all which he argues directly, and in some of them largely, against that doctrine. And after having observed, that *what we find in the book of nature is undoubtedly the word of God*, he asserts, that “there we shall find no foundation for the scheme of a particular providence*.” He declares indeed, “that he will not be so uncharitable as to say, that divines mean to blaspheme [in their doctrine of a particular providence],” yet that this he will take upon him to say, that “he who follows them cannot avoid presumption and profaneness, and must be much on his guard against blasphemy ||.”

That I may observe some order in my reflections upon this subject, I shall first offer some observations for stating the right notion of divine providence, and what we are to understand by a particular providence. And then shall proceed to shew the absurdity and ill consequences of the author's scheme. And lastly consider the arguments he hath urged in support of it, and the objections he hath made against the doctrine of a particular providence.

* Vol. V. p. 471. || *Ib.* p. 464.

By the doctrine of providence I understand LETTER VII. the doctrine of an all-perfect mind, preserving and governing the vast universe in all its parts, presiding over all the creatures, especially rational moral agents, inspecting their conduct, and superintending and ordering the events relating to them, in the best and fittest manner, with infinite wisdom, righteousness, and equity. And such a providence cannot reasonably be denied by those, who believe, that the world was originally formed by a most wise and powerful and infinitely perfect cause and author. For whatever reasons induced him to create the world, which may be justly supposed to have been for the communications of his goodness, and for the joint exercise and display of his glorious attributes and perfections, must equally dispose him to take care of it, and govern it when made. Accordingly the Epicureans and others who denied a providence, did also deny that the world was made by God, and attributed the formation of it, not to the wisdom, the power, and will of an intelligent cause, but to a wild chance, or fortuitous concurrence of atoms, or to an equally blind fatal necessity. And so far their scheme, however false and absurd, was consistent with itself. For they could find no effectual way to exclude God from the government of the world, which was what they wanted to get rid of, but by excluding him from the making of it too. Supposing one supreme absolutely perfect Cause and Author of all things, who made this vast uni-

LETTER VII.  verse, and all the orders of beings in it, which is what Lord *Bolingbroke* not only allows, but expressly asserts, it follows by the most evident consequence, that the same infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, which gave existence to the world and all things in it, still presideth over the universal frame in all its parts. The beautiful and constant order, which is still maintained in the inanimate material system, plainly sheweth that this stupendous frame of nature, consisting of such an unconceivable variety of parts, is under the constant superintendency of a most wise and powerful presiding Mind, ever present to his own work. But the providence of God is especially to be considered as exercised towards reasonable creatures, moral agents, which are undoubtedly the noblest and most excellent of his creatures. The material system, whatever order or beauty appeareth in it, is not itself conscious of that beauty and order. Nor are mere sensitive beings capable of making proper reflections upon it, or of admiring, adoring, obeying the great Parent of the universe. This is the sole privilege of rational intelligent beings. If therefore the providence of God extended to any of his creatures at all, we may be sure that he exerciseth a special care over his reasonable creatures. And since he hath given them such noble faculties and moral powers, will govern them in a way suitable to those faculties and powers. And this certainly is the most admirable part of the divine administrations in the government of

of the universe. For to govern numberless myriads of active intelligent beings, in their several orders and degrees, each of whom have a will and choice of their own, and a power of determining their own actions, to exercise a constant superintendency over them, and to order the events relating to them, and to dispense to them proper retributions, not only according to their outward actions, but the inward dispositions and principles from which those actions flow: I say, thus to govern them without infringing the liberty which belongeth to them, as moral agents, must needs argue a wisdom as well as power that exceedeth our comprehension. Yet who will undertake to prove that this is impossible, or even difficult, to an infinite, all-comprehending mind? We may reasonably conceive, that that immense Being, whose essence possesseth every part of this vast universe, is present to every individual of the human race. And if that most wise, holy, and absolutely perfect Being, the Great Governor of the world, be always present to every individual of the human race, then every individual, and all their particular actions, cases, and circumstances, must be under his providential inspection and superintendency. And as he knoweth all these things when they actually happen, so he, to whom, by our author's own acknowledgement, future things are as if they were present, saw them before they came to pass. And therefore it was not difficult for him

LETTER ^{VII.} to form such a comprehensive scheme of things in his infinite mind, as should extend to all their particular cases, and the events relating to them, in a manner perfectly consistent with the exercise of their reasonable moral powers, and the use of their own endeavours.

And now it appears what is to be understood by the doctrine of a particular providence. It signifies, That providence extends its care to the particulars or individuals of the human race, which is what this writer denies: that God exerciseth a continual inspection over them, and knoweth and observeth both the good and evil actions they perform, and even the most secret affections and dispositions of their hearts: that he observeth them not merely as an unconcerned spectator, who is perfectly indifferent about them, but as the supreme ruler and judge, so as to govern them with infinite wisdom in a way consistent with their moral agency, and to reward or punish them in the properest manner, and in the fittest season. And as all their actions, so the events which befall them, are under his supreme direction and superintendency. Particular events are, in the ordinary course of things, ordered in such a manner as is subordinate to the general laws of providence, relating to the physical and moral world. And what are usually called occasional interpositions, are properly to be considered as applications of general laws to particular cases and occasions. They make a part of the universal plan of providence, and are

are appointed and provided for in it, as having been perfectly foreseen from the beginning, and originally intended in the government of reasonable beings.

LETTER
VII.

The doctrine of a particular providence taken in this view is of vast consequence, and if duly considered and believed, could scarce fail to have a happy influence over our whole temper and deportment. How solicitous, how earnestly desirous should this make us to approve ourselves to our supreme governor and judge, and to walk always as in his sight! What an animating consideration is it, when we set about the performance of a good action, to be assured that God in his holy providence observeth the good deed in every circumstance, and is ready to assist and support us in it, and most certainly will not suffer it to pass unrewarded! On the other hand, what an effectual restraint would it be to wicked actions, if we had this thought strongly impressed upon our minds, that they are all perfectly known in every circumstance to the most wise and righteous governor of the world; and that if he should not at present follow them with immediate punishment, yet the time is coming, when he will call us to a strict account for them! Finally, a firm belief of a particular providence, as most wisely ordering and disposing the events relating to particular persons, is a source of satisfaction and comfort amidst all the uncertainties and fluctuations of this present world. No consideration is so well

LETTER
VII.

fitted to produce a chearful resignation, and an inward solid peace and joy of heart as this, that all things, all particular cases and circumstances, are under the direction and government of the most perfect wisdom, righteousness and goodness; and that nothing can befall us without the direction or permission of the supreme disposer.

Nothing therefore could be worse founded than the boasts of the Epicureans, who expected to be applauded as friends and benefactors to mankind, on the account of their endeavours to deliver them from the apprehensions of a providence. This might indeed be some relief to very bad men, and tend to make them easy in their sins, but it was an attempt to rob good men of that which is the chief support and comfort of their lives, and the most powerful encouragement to the steady uniform practice of piety and virtue. Lord *Bolingbroke* therefore was very ill employed, when he used his utmost efforts to destroy the doctrine of providence as extending its care and inspection to individuals; since without this, the acknowledgment of what he calls a general providence would be of no great advantage, and would be, with regard to all the purposes of religion, little better than to deny that there is a providence at all.

This leads me to what I proposed to shew in the next place, *viz.* the absurdity, and the ill consequences, of the scheme his Lordship hath advanced.

It is an absurd and inconsistent scheme. He pretends to allow that God's providence extends to nations and large communities, that it regards men collectively, but not individually. But it is hard to conceive how a proper care could be taken of collective bodies, if the individuals of which they were composed were absolutely neglected, and no regard had to them at all. A human government, that would have no regard to the cases of particular persons, to do them right or secure them from wrong, could scarce be accounted a government. Besides, it may be asked, what his lordship means by collective bodies. There was a time when men had not yet formed themselves into political societies; must it be said that they were then not the objects of providence at all? or, will it be allowed that providence extended its care to them, whilst they were only in families? And how could families, either larger or smaller, be taken care of, if the individuals, of which families consist, were neglected? And when several families united together, and formed larger communities, must it be said, that providence quitted its care of the families to which it had extended before, and confined its inspection to those larger communities? And then it might be enquired, how large must a community be, in order to its being the proper object of divine providence? Does providence take notice of single cities, or smaller republics, or only of those communities which are become so nume-

LETTER

VII.

rous as to be united into large nations or empires? It may be farther asked, In what sense is it to be understood, that providence extends its care to collective bodies? All that he understands by it seems to be this: That “the course of things has been always the same, that national virtue and national vice have always produced national happiness or misery in a due proportion, and are by consequence the great sanctions of the law of nature*.” The appointing this general constitution then seems to be all the concern that he allows to divine providence with regard to large communities or collective bodies: and the only sanctions he allows of the law of nature (as I shall have occasion more distinctly to shew, when I come to consider the account he gives of that law) are the public happiness or misery of large societies or nations; and these are often some ages in operating. It frequently happens that nations and large communities continue for a considerable time in great outward prosperity, when there is little national virtue remaining. And our author himself acknowledges, that the motives drawn from the effects of virtue and vice on collective bodies, are “such as particular persons will be apt to think do not concern them, because they consider themselves as individuals, and catch at pleasure rather than happiness†.” And as nations are made up of families and smaller societies, if these be not

* Vol. V. p. 472.

† Vol. IV. p. 288.

well constituted, as they cannot be, where there is no sense of religion, no fear of God, or regard to a providence as extending to individuals, there cannot be much national order or virtue.

LETTER
VII.
~~~~~

Lord *Bolingbroke* would, in my opinion, have been more consistent with himself, if he had absolutely denied, that providence hath any regard to mankind at all, than to pretend that it extends to collective bodies, but not to individuals. For the same arguments, which prove a providence as extending to mankind in general, do also, if rightly considered, prove that it is exercised towards particular persons, and extendeth to particular cases and circumstances. This writer sets himself, as hath been already observed, with great appearance of zeal, to vindicate the goodness and justice of divine providence in its dispensations towards mankind, in opposition both to Atheists and Divines. But how the justice and goodness of providence towards mankind can be vindicated, if no regard be had to individuals, is hard to see. He himself observes, that "justice requires, that punishments should be measured out in various degrees and measures according to the various circumstances of particular cases, and in proportion to them \*." And again he repeats it, "that justice requires, that rewards and punishments should be measured out in every particular case, in proportion to the merit

\* Vol. V. p. 494.

" and

LETTER <sup>VII.</sup> “and demerit of each individual\*.” How then can he pretend to vindicate the justice of providence in this present state, when he makes it essential to justice that regard should be had to the case of individuals, and yet affirms, that providence doth not consider men individually at all, but only collectively?

And as his scheme is absurd, and inconsistent with itself, so it is attended with the most pernicious consequences, which ought to create a horror of it in every well-disposed mind. If providence hath no regard to individuals, there can be no sense of the divine favour for good actions, no fear of the divine displeasure for evil ones; and, as will appear to be his Lordship’s sentiment, no future account to be apprehended. Thus every man is left to do what is right in his own eyes without the dread of a supreme governor and judge. It is true, God hath established general laws at the beginning, but he concerneth himself no farther. And our author will not allow that in these general laws, or the plan originally formed in the divine mind, God had any regard unto, or made any provision for, particular persons, actions, or events. Good men therefore have no resource in their calamities; no ground to apply to God for support under them; no expectation of assistance from him, or from any other being, acting under his direction, as the ministers and instruments of his providence. They are deprived of the comforts

arising from a consciousness of his special approbation and complacency, and from the prospects of reward from him here or hereafter. Thus *hope* is excluded, which, as his Lordship observes, "above all things softens the evils of this life, and is that cordial drop which sweetens every bitter potion, even the last \*." On the other hand, wicked men have nothing to fear from God for their evil actions. He says indeed, in a passage cited above, that "providence has provided means to punish individuals, by directing men to form societies, and to establish laws, in the execution of which civil magistrates are the vicegerents of providence." But I do not see with what propriety upon his scheme civil magistrates can be said to be the vicegerents of providence. For if providence doth not consider men individually at all, how can magistrates, in punishing individuals, be regarded as the vicegerents of providence? Or if providence constituted them its vicegerents, and there were no sanctions at all proposed for particular persons but those of the civil laws, it would follow that men may be as wicked as they will, and give as great a loose as they please to their appetites and passions, provided they can manage so as to escape punishment from human judicatories, which a man may do, and yet be a very bad man. Human magistrates are often themselves corrupt. *Solomon's* observation is certainly just. *I have seen the place*

LETTER  
VII.

LETTER  
VII. *of judgment, that wickedness was there, and  
the place of righteousness, that iniquity was  
there, Eccles. iii. 16.* Very unjust things are  
often done under colour of forms of law. Or,  
suppose the laws good, and the magistrates just  
and upright, no human laws can reward or  
punish inward good or bad affections, intentions,  
and dispositions of the heart. If therefore  
there were no regard to a supreme governor or  
judge, to the divine approbation or displeasure,  
as extending to individuals, or to a future ac-  
count, there is great reason to think that man-  
kind in general would be far more wicked and  
dissolute than they are. It is his Lordship's ob-  
servation, that "amidst the contingencies of  
" human affairs the odds will always be on the  
" side of appetite—Which reason cannot quite  
" subdue in the strongest minds, and by which  
" she is perpetually subdued in the weakest \*." And accordingly the ablest politicians have  
thought the aids of religion, which especially  
includes a regard to providence as extending to  
individuals, absolutely necessary for strengthen-  
ing the bands of civil government.

I shall now consider the arguments Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered in support of his scheme, and the objections he hath advanced against the doctrine of a particular providence.

He frequently intimates, that the doctrine of a particular providence is needless; "since the  
" ordinary course of things preserved and con-



“ ducted by a general providence is sufficient to  
 “ confirm what the law of nature and reason  
 “ teaches us \*.” But it appears from what hath  
 been already observed, that the doctrine of a  
 general providence, as he understands it, *i. e.* a  
 providence that has no regard to individuals at  
 all, to their actions, or to the events that befall  
 them, is far from being sufficient to the pur-  
 poses of religion and virtue, or of human socie-  
 ties: That it neither furnisheth proper comfort  
 and supports for the encouragement of good  
 men, nor is sufficient to strike terror into bad  
 men, and to be a restraint to vice and wicked-  
 ness. It hath also been shewn, that the notion  
 of a general providence, as excluding all regard  
 to individuals, and to their actions and concern-  
 ments, cannot be supported, nor made to con-  
 sist with reason or with itself. And whereas it  
 is represented as a degrading the divine Majesty,  
 to suppose him to concern himself about what  
 relates to such inconsiderable beings, as are the  
 individuals of the human race; this objection,  
 though varnished over with a pretence of con-  
 sulting God’s honour, doth at the bottom argue  
 mean and unworthy notions of him. It is in  
 effect a judging of God by our own imperfecti-  
 ons. Our views are narrow and limited, and  
 cannot take in many things at once, nor attend  
 to smaller matters without neglecting things of  
 greater consequence. But it is otherwise with  
 a being of infinite perfection, who is intimately  
 present to every part of this vast universe, and

LETTER  
 VII.

\* Vol. V. p. 404.

LETTER

VII.

knoweth and taketh care of all things at once, with the same ease as if he had only one single thing to attend to. He is capable of exercising a most wise providential care towards all his creatures in a way suited to their several natures, conditions, and circumstances: nor can the multiplicity of things occasion the least confusion or perplexity in his all-comprehending mind.

The arguments which he urgeth against a particular providence, in the LVIIth of his Fragments and Essays, for several pages together \*, proceed upon a continued misrepresentation of the sense of those whom he has thought fit to oppose. He there chargeth the divines as maintaining, that God ought by particular providences to interpose in every single instance, for giving an immediate reward to every good action, and for punishing every evil one, even in this present state. He supposes them also to hold that some men are necessarily determined to good actions by divine influences communicated to them, and others for want of those influences unavoidably determined to evil. And then he argues, that on such a supposition there would be no room for free choice, nor consequently for virtue or vice, merit or demerit, nor therefore for justice or injustice †. He urgeth further, that if good men were constantly and remarkably distinguished by a particular providence, it would be apt to produce presumption in them, to destroy or prevent their

\* Vol. V. p. 424, *et seq.*† *Ib.* p. 425, 426.

benevolence, and consequently their goodness; and to harden the wicked \*. And that even on that supposition, the providence of God could not be vindicated in the opinion of mankind, or of divines themselves, since still it would not be agreed who were good men. The *Mahometans*, Christians, and different sects of the latter, would insist upon it, that goodness includes a belief of their distinguishing tenets, and an attachment to their several systems of religion. "One would pass for a good man at *Rome*, another at *Geneva*," &c. †. But he seems not to have considered, that upon the supposition he puts, there could be no place for this objection; since if every good man and good action was to be immediately and remarkably distinguished by a particular interposition of divine providence, and every bad man and evil action to be immediately punished, there would be no room left for men's passing different judgments concerning the goodness or badness of persons or actions; for on that supposition, there would be a visible determination of heaven in favour of every good man and good action; so that no man could doubt, upon seeing any person thus remarkably favoured and distinguished, that he was really good, whatever denomination he might pass under. But the truth is, no divine ever advanced such an hypothesis as he here argueth against. By the doctrine of a particular

LETTER  
VII.  
~

\* Vol. V. p. 428, 429.

† *Ib.* p. 431, 432.



LETTER  
VII.

providence they do not mean a constant particular interposition of divine providence for rewarding every good man and virtuous action, and punishing every bad man and every wicked action, in an immediate and visible manner here on earth. On the contrary, they universally maintain that this present state is a state of trial and discipline ; and that it would be no way agreeable to the nature of such a state to have all good men and good actions immediately and remarkably rewarded, and all wicked men immediately punished : That the temporary sufferings of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked, are permitted for very wise ends, and may be reasonably and consistently accounted for, on the supposition that this present life is a state of trial ; though they could not well be accounted for, if this were designed to be a state of final retributions, or to be the only state of existence allotted us.

The greatest part of what he offers against a particular providence in the LXIIId of his Fragments and Essays, relates to *occasional* interpositions, which he pretends would be miracles if they were real. “ Such, he says, they would be “ strictly, whether they were contrary to the “ established course of nature or not ; for the miracle consists in the extraordinary interposition, “ as much as in the nature of the thing brought “ to pass : That the miracle would be as real in “ the one case as in the other ; and the reality “ might be made evident enough by the occasions,



“ sions, by the circumstances, by the repetition  
 “ of it on similar occasions, and in similar cir-  
 “ cumstances; and above all, by this circum-  
 “ stance, that the assumed particular providence  
 “ was a direct answer to particular prayers, and  
 “ acts of devotion offered up to procure it \*.”

LETTER  
 VII.

Here he takes upon him to give a new and arbitrary definition of a miracle. Though a thing hath nothing in it contrary to the established course of nature, yet it is to be regarded as a miracle, if there be supposed to be any special agency of the divine providence in it, suited to particular occasions and circumstances; and above all, if it be supposed to come in answer to prayer. But if the occasional interpositions he refers to be perfectly agreeable to the general laws of nature and of providence, and be only special applications of general laws to particular occasions, I do not see how they can be properly said to be miraculous at all; or how their being supposed to come in answer to prayer can make them so.

But he urgeth farther, that “ if providences  
 “ were directed according to the particular de-  
 “ sires, and even wants of persons equally well  
 “ qualified and intitled to the divine favour, the  
 “ whole order of nature, physical and moral,  
 “ would be subverted, the affairs of mankind  
 “ would fall into the utmost confusion—And  
 “ if this scheme were true, the world would be  
 “ governed by miracles, till miracles lost their  
 “ name †.”

\* Vol. V. p. 458, 459. † *Ib.* p. 460.

LETTER

VII.

But all this proceeds upon a great mistake of the point in question. None of the divines that hold a particular providence, *i. e.* a providence which extendeth its care to particular persons or individuals of the human race, maintain or suppose that God must interpose to satisfy all the different desires and prayers of men, many of which, as he observes, are repugnant to one another. If the prayers be of the right kind, such as reason and religion prescribes, they must be always offered up with this condition or limitation, which the Scripture expressly directs us to, *viz.* that we must desire the things we pray for, so far and no farther than they are agreeable to the divine will, and to what it seemeth fit to God in his infinite wisdom to appoint. Supposing therefore a good man doth not obtain the particular blessing he prays for, he may rest satisfied in this, that it is what the divine wisdom doth not see fit to grant; and he only desired it under that condition. Or, if he receives that particular good thing he prayed for, and regards it as an answer to his prayer, still there is nothing miraculous in the case. There is nothing done in contravention to the usual course of things which the divine wisdom hath established. It may justly be supposed to be a law of the moral world, that it is proper for us, in testimony of our dependence upon God, and in acknowledgement of his providence, to apply to him by prayer for the blessings we stand in need of. And that prayer so qualified as God requireth, proceeding from

from an honest and upright heart, and from good affections and intentions, and accompanied with the use of proper endeavours on our parts, is among the means appointed by divine wisdom for obtaining the most valuable benefits, especially those of a spiritual nature. And the blessings thus communicated may be justly said to be communicated not in a miraculous way, but in a way that is perfectly agreeable to the general laws of providence, and the order which the divine wisdom hath appointed. Any one that considers this will easily see how little what our author has here offered is to the purpose; and yet he goes on to declaim after his manner, that particular providence puts a force on the mechanical laws of nature, and on the freedom of the will in a multitude of instances; and that those who maintain this doctrine suppose that the laws of gravitation must be sometimes suspended, sometimes precipitated, in compliance with men's desires, and the tottering edifice must be kept miraculously from falling\*.

Among the extraordinary interpositions of divine providence, he reckons “ the metaphysical or physical influence of spirits, suggestions, silent communications, injections of ideas. These things, he declares, he cannot comprehend; and he compares them to the altering or suspending the course of the sun, or revolutions of the earth, in the physical system. And that all such interpositions in the

\* Vol. V. p. 460.

LETTER  
VII.

LETTER  
VII.

“ intellectual system, as should give thoughts and  
 “ new dispositions to the minds of men, cannot  
 “ be conceived without altering in every such in-  
 “ stance the natural progression of the human  
 “ understanding, and that freedom of the will  
 “ which every man is conscious that he has\*.”

Our author has here let us know what he thinks of all revelations, inspirations, or communications from God the Supreme Spirit, or from subordinate created spirits to the human mind; that he regards them as inconsistent with the *laws of intellectual system*, and the *natural progression of the human understanding*, or *essential freedom of the will*. But whence could he know enough of the laws of the intellectual system, to be able to pronounce that this is inconsistent with those laws? That one man may suggest or communicate thoughts and ideas to another by words and language, and that there is nothing in this contrary to the nature and order of the understanding, or freedom of the will, is universally acknowledged: And why then should it be thought inconsistent with these for God himself, or spiritual Beings superior to man, to communicate thoughts and ideas to the human mind? The most natural way of working upon men as reasonable creatures, and of influencing their actions in a way agreeable to the just order of their faculties, is by suggesting proper thoughts or ideas to their minds, and our not

\* Vol. V. p 414, 415-



being able particularly to explain how this is done is no just objection against it. This writer himself elsewhere speaking of *that extraordinary action of God upon the mind which the word Inspiration is now used to denote*, expressly acknowledges, that “it is no more incomprehensible than the ordinary action of mind on body, or body on mind\*.” And indeed it cannot without the highest absurdity be denied, that God can work upon the spirits of men by an immediate influence, and yet in such a way, as is perfectly agreeable to their rational natures, and which may not put any constraint upon the freedom of their wills. And many cases may be supposed, in which his doing so may answer valuable ends. It may also be easily conceived, that he can make impressions upon men’s minds by various other means, which he may make use of in his wise and sovereign providence to this purpose, without at all infringing the order of things in the natural or moral world.

He farther argues, that to suppose a providence extending to individuals, and particular occasional interpositions, “is to suppose that there are as many providences as there are men:” Or, as he elsewhere expresseth it, that “common providence would break into a multitude of particular providences for the supply of wants, and grant of petitions†.” But there is no real foundation for this pretence. There is one universal providence, which may

\* Vol. III. p. 463.

† *Ib.* p. 420.

LETTER be considered as extending to particular persons  
 VII. and cases, all of which are perfectly known to  
 God, and (as was before hinted) occasion no  
 confusion or distraction in his infinite mind.  
 Our author indeed declares, that "they who  
 " have attempted to shew that God may act by  
 " particular and occasional interpositions, con-  
 " sistently with the preservation of the general  
 " order, appear to him quite unintelligible\*."  
 If it were so, our not being able distinctly to  
 shew, how particular occasional interpositions  
 may consist with the doctrine of a general pro-  
 vidence, would be no argument at all against it.  
 Since, as he himself observes upon another oc-  
 casion, "It is impertinent to deny the existence  
 " of any phenomenon, merely because we can-  
 " not account for it ‡." And yet we may ea-  
 sily conceive in general, that they are perfectly  
 reconcilable, since, as hath been already hinted,  
 these occasional interpositions are usually no  
 more than the applications of the general laws  
 of providence to particular cases and circum-  
 stances. That there may be, or that there have  
 been, such interpositions, he does not pretend  
 absolutely to deny. But, he says, that "we have  
 " no foundation for them in our own expe-  
 " rience, or in any history except that of the  
 " Bible †." And yet soon after observes, that  
 "every religion boasts of many instances,  
 " wherein the divine providence has been thus

\* Vol. III. p. 414. † *Ib.* p. 468. ‡ Vol. V. p. 414.

“exercised ||.” And certain it is, that this hath been the general sentiment of mankind. Besides the ordinary course of things which is to be regarded as under the constant care and direction of a sovereign providence, there have been events of a remarkable and uncommon nature, though not properly miraculous, of which there are accounts in the most authentic histories, and in which men have been apt to acknowledge a special interposition of divine providence. The most important events have been brought about by the seemingly smallest and most unlikely means. Things have been often strangely conducted through many intricate turns to produce events contrary to all human expectation. Actions have been over-ruled to effects and issues quite opposite to the intentions of the actors. The most artful schemes of human policy have been strangely baffled and disappointed. Surprising changes have been wrought upon the spirits of men, and restraints laid upon their passions in a manner that can scarce be accounted for, and upon which great events have depended. Such things have naturally led mankind to acknowledge a divine hand, and a providence overruling human affairs. I am sensible many of those who honour themselves with the title of Free-thinkers will be apt to ascribe this to superstition or enthusiasm. But what right have they to pronounce against the general sentiments of mankind, and which seem to have arisen from

LETTER VII. the observation of events which argue the over-  
 ruling interposition of a superior invisible agency.

He observes with a sneer, that “there is many  
 “an old woman who is ready to relate with  
 “much spiritual pride, the particular provi-  
 “dences that attended her and hers\*.” As to  
 the charge of spiritual pride, it is no more than  
 he hath advanced against all that believe a par-  
 ticular providence, interesting itself in the af-  
 fairs of men; the belief of which he imputeth  
 to *high notions of human importance*. That  
 he himself had high notions of his own saga-  
 city cannot be doubted: But the sentiments he  
 is pleased to ascribe to the old woman, seem  
 to me to be more reasonable, and would, if  
 generally entertained, have a much better in-  
 fluence on mankind, than his own. Is it not  
 much better, and more agreeable to reason and  
 nature, for dependent creatures to regard the  
 benefits they receive, and the good events which  
 befall them, as owing to the interposition of a  
 most wise and benign providence, and to ac-  
 knowlege with thankfulness the condescending  
 care and goodness of God in such instances;  
 than to pass them over with a regardless eye,  
 from an apprehension that God doth not con-  
 cern himself with the affairs of men; that he is  
 utterly unmindful of individuals, and taketh  
 no notice of their actions, or of the events that  
 relate to them? And this is the goodly scheme

\* Vol. V. p. 413.

which



which this author hath taken so much pains to LETTER  
VII.  
establish.

But he urgeth, that it is of no use to acknowledge particular interpositions of divine providence, since they cannot be distinguished from events that happen in the course of God's general providence. "The effects, saith he, that are assumed of particular providences, are either false, or undistinguishable from those of a general providence, and become particular by nothing more than the application, which vain superstition or pious fraud makes of them\*." And he observes, that this holds with respect to the case not only of particular persons, but of collective bodies. "Their circumstances are so nearly alike, and they return so often to be equally objects of these supposed providences, that no man will dare to determine, where these providences have been, or should have been employed, and where not †." It appears then, that though he sometimes seems to acknowledge the care of divine providence as extending to collective bodies, though not to individuals, yet in reality he does not admit that providence interposes with regard to the one more than the other; or that in either case we can justly ascribe any of the events that befall men, whether individually or collectively considered, to divine providence; since we cannot discern or distinguish in what events providence has been employed,

\* Vol. V. p. 420. See also p. 450. † *Ib.* p. 460.

LETTER and in what not. But the truth is, we need not  
 VII. be put to the difficulty of thus distinguishing,  
 if we believe that providence is really concerned  
 in them all. It over-ruleth both the affairs and  
 events relating to nations and to particular per-  
 sons, disposing and governing them in the fittest  
 manner, according to what seemeth most fit to  
 his infinite wisdom, to which all circumstances  
 are perfectly known. And even where the events  
 seem contrary, prosperous to one nation or par-  
 ticular person, adverse to another, providence  
 is to be regarded in both. For we can never  
 err in judging that all events whatsoever are un-  
 der the wise direction and superintendency of  
 a sovereign providence, tho' when we undertake  
 to assign the particular reasons of God's provi-  
 dential dispensations, we may easily be mista-  
 ken.

Our author farther objecteth against the doc-  
 trine of a particular providence, that it supposes  
 all mankind to be under an universal theocracy  
 like the *Jews*; and he observes, that even in  
 that case it would not have the effect to engage  
 men to virtue, or deter them from vice and  
 wickedness, any more than it did the *Jews* \*.  
 But he here confoundeth things that are of di-  
 stinct consideration. The heathens, and all man-  
 kind in all ages, have been under the care and  
 superintendency of divine providence, and even  
 of a particular providence in the sense in which  
 we are now considering it; *i. e.* a providence

\* Vol. V. p. 412.

which

which extendeth to the individuals of the human race, inspecting their actions, and disposing and governing the events relating to them. But they were not under the *Jewish* theocracy, which was a peculiar constitution, established for very wise purposes, the reasons and ends of which I shall afterwards have occasion more particularly to consider. At present I shall only observe, that though under that constitution we may justly suppose there were extraordinary interpositions in a way of mercy and judgment, both national, and relating to particular persons, more frequently than there would have been under another constitution; yet the design of it was not, as our author supposes, that providence should interpose for giving a present immediate reward to every good man, and every good action, and for immediately punishing every bad one. We find frequent pathetical complaints even under that dispensation, of the calamities and sufferings of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked. This gave occasion to the 37th and 73d Psalms. See also Psalm xvii. 14. *Jer.* xii. 1, 2. The proper ultimate reward of good men, and punishment of the wicked, was still reserved for a future state of retributions, which though not expressly mentioned in their law, was believed and expected; as appeareth from what *Solomon* hath said concerning it, *Eccles.* iii. 16, 17. xii. 14.

I shall conclude this letter with taking notice of an observation of our author, which is designed

LETTER VII. signed to take off the force of an argument that Mr. *Wollaston* had offered. “ It will be of little service, saith he, to the scheme of particular providences, to say, like *Wollaston*, that there may be incorporeal, or at least invisible beings, of intellect and powers superior to man, and capable of mighty things: And that these beings may be the ministers of God, and the authors of those providences.” He pretends, that there is no proof that there are such beings; and ridicules the doctrine of *Genii* or *Dæmons*, as having been “ owing to antient astrologers, and the knaves or madmen that professed theurgic magic.” And he argues, that “ if these angels act by the immediate command of God, it is in opposition to his general providence, and to supply the defects of it; and that it is to give up the government over mankind to those beings\*.” But it is with an ill grace that this writer seems here to question the existence of angels, when yet he frequently intimates, that there are many orders of beings much superior to man, and that man is of the lowest order of intellectual beings. He represents it as a thing highly probable, that “ there is a gradation from man through various forms of sense, intelligence, and reason, up to beings unknown to us, whose rank in the intellectual world is even above our conception†.” And that “ there may be as much difference between some other creatures of God and man,

\* Vol. V. p. 463, 464. † *Ib.* p. 329, 330.



“ as there is between man and an oyster \*.” LETTER  
VII.  
 And if it be allowed, that there are created intelligences much superior to man, where is the absurdity of supposing that they are employed by divine wisdom as the instruments and agents of providence in its administrations towards the human race? Higher orders of creatures may in the original plan of providence be designed to assist, and exercise some superintendency over the lower. It may reasonably be conceived, that this may contribute to promote the beauty and order of the universe, and to connect the different orders of beings, and carry on a proper intercourse between them. It is certain, that the existence, and the interposition of such beings on special occasions, has been generally believed by mankind in all ages. And it is clearly determined in the revelation contained in the holy Scripture: So that it may be now assumed, not merely as a reasonable hypothesis, but as a truth that can be depended upon. Nor does the making use of angels as agents or instruments in the administrations of providence argue any *defect* of providence, as he is pleased to insinuate, which still oversees and directs the whole. For when God makes use of instruments in the course of his providence, it is not because, like human governors, he is unable to do it immediately by himself, and cannot be personally present: For he is still present to every part of the creation; and all things are under his direction and super-

\* Vol. IV. p. 177.

intendency.

LETTER  
VII. } intendency. But he is pleased to make use of some of his creatures as instruments in conferring benefits, or inflicting chastisements upon others, for the better carrying on the order and œconomy of his kingdom, and for many wise ends which we cannot pretend at present distinctly to assign.

In my next I shall consider what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retributions, which will let us farther into the true intention of his scheme.

*I am, &c.*



LETTER

LETTER VIII.

*Favourable declarations of Lord Bolingbroke concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state. He represents it as having been believed from the earliest antiquity, and acknowledges the great usefulness of that doctrine. Yet it appears from many passages in his works, that he himself was not for admitting it. He treats it as an Egyptian invention, taken up without reason, a vulgar error, which was rejected when men began to examine. He will not allow that the soul is a spiritual substance distinct from the body, and pretends that all the phenomena lead us to think that the soul dies with the body. Reflections upon this. The immateriality of the soul argued from its essential properties, which are intirely different from the properties of matter, and incompatible with them. The author's objections answered. Concerning the moral argument for a future state drawn from the unequal distributions of this present state. Lord Bolingbroke's charge against this way of arguing as blasphemous and injurious to divine providence considered. His great inconsistency in setting up as an advocate for the goodness and justice of Providence. That maxim, Whatever is is best, examined. If rightly understood, it is not inconsistent with the belief of a future state.*

SIR,

LETTER  
VIII.

S I R,

**H**AVING considered the attempt made by Lord *Bolingbroke* against God's moral attributes, and against the doctrine of providence as exercising a care and inspection over the individuals of the human race, I now come to another part of his scheme, and which seems to be designed to set aside the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retributions. I join these together, because there is a close connection between them, and his lordship frequently represents the one of these as the consequence of the other.

That I may make a fair representation of his sentiments, I shall first produce those passages in which he seems to express himself very favourably with respect to the doctrine of a future state, and then shall compare them with other passages which have a contrary aspect, that we may be the better able to form a just notion of his real design.

He observes, that “ the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state of rewards and punishments, began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity; and when we begin to have any, we find it established \* : That it was strongly inculcated from time immemorial ; and as early as the most antient and learned nations appear to us.” And he expressly acknowledges the use-

\* Vol. V. p. 237.





LETTER  
VIII. “ all the systems of Paganism \*.” And he says,  
“ the heathen legislators might have reason to  
“ add the terrors of another life to that of the  
“ judgments of God, and the laws of men †.”

And as he owns, that this doctrine is very useful to mankind, so he does not pretend positively to deny the truth of it. He introduces a plain man of common sound sense declaring his sentiments upon this subject, and that though he could not affirm, he could not deny the immortality of the soul; and that there was nothing to tempt him to deny it; since whatever other worlds there may be, the same God still governs; and that he has no more to fear from him in one world than in another: That like the auditor in *Tully's* first *Tusculan* disputation, he is pleased with the prospect of immortality ‡. Again, he observes, that “ reason will neither  
“ affirm nor deny that there is a future state:  
“ And that the doctrine of rewards and punishments in it has so great a tendency to enforce  
“ the civil laws, and to restrain the vices of  
“ men, that reason, which cannot decide for  
“ it on principles of natural theology, will not  
“ decide against it on principles of good policy.  
“ Let this doctrine rest on the authority of revelation. A theist, who does not believe  
“ the revelation, can have no aversion to the  
“ doctrine ||.” After having mentioned the scheme of a future state proposed in the *analogy*

\* Vol. V. p. 238. † *Ib.* p. 488. ‡ Vol. III. p. 558,  
559. || Vol. V. p. 322, 489.

of reason and revelation, p. I. cap. I. he says,  
 “ This hypothesis may be received; and that it  
 “ does not so much as imply any thing repugn-  
 “ ant to the perfections of the divine nature.”  
 He adds, “ I receive with joy the expectations  
 “ it raises in my mind.—And the antient and  
 “ modern Epicureans provoke my indignation,  
 “ when they boast as a mighty acquisition their  
 “ pretended certainty that the body and the soul  
 “ die together. If they had this certainty,  
 “ could this discovery be so very comfortable?  
 “ —I should have no difficulty which to chuse,  
 “ if the option was proposed to me to exist  
 “ after death, or to die whole \*.”

If we were to judge of the author's real sentiments by such passages as these, we might be apt to think, that though he was not certain of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, yet he was much inclined to favour that doctrine as not only useful, but probable too. But there are other passages by which it appears, that notwithstanding these fair professions he did not really acknowledge or believe that doctrine himself, and as far as his reasoning or authority could go, has endeavoured to weaken, if not destroy, the belief of it in the minds of others too.

He represents this doctrine as at best no more than a useful invention. He expressly says, that  
 “ the antient theists, polytheists, philosophers,  
 “ and legislators, *invented* the doctrine of fu-  
 “ ture rewards and punishments, to give an ad-

\* Vol. V. p. 491, 492.—See also *ib.* p. 506, 507.

LETTER  
VIII.

ditional strength to the sanctions of the law of nature \*.” And particularly that the *invention* of it was owing to *Egypt, the mother of good policy as well as superstition* †. The general prevalency of this opinion he attributes to the *predominant pride of the human heart*; and that “every one was flattered by a system that raised him in imagination above corporeal nature, and made him hope to pass an immortality in the fellowship of the Gods ‡.” And after having said, that it cannot be demonstrated by reason, he adds, that “it was originally an hypothesis, and may therefore be a vulgar error. It was taken upon trust by the people, till it came to be disputed and cleared by such as did examine ||.” So that he supposes, that those who believed it took it up upon trust without reason or examination, and that they who examined rejected it. He pronounces, that the reasonings employed by divines in proof of a future state are “problematical and futile;” and that “the immortality of the soul rests on moral proofs, and those proofs are precarious to say no worse of them §.” After seeming to speak very favourably in a passage cited above, of the hypothesis of a future state advanced in *Butler’s Analogy*, he says, “It has no foundation in reason, and is purely imaginary.” He frequently supposes a connection between the immortality of the soul and a future state; that

\* Vol. V. p. 288. † *Ib.* p. 352, 489. ‡ *Ib.* p. 237.  
§ *Ib.* p. 352. § *Ib.* p. 323, 501.



the latter is in consequence of the former; and he has endeavoured to subvert the foundation of that immortality by denying that the soul is a distinct substance from the body. This is what he hath set himself pretty largely to shew in several parts of his *Essay concerning the nature, extent, and reality of human knowlege*, which takes up near one half of the third volume of his works; especially in the first, eighth, and ninth sections of that essay. He expressly asserts, that “there is not any thing, “philosophically speaking, which obliges us to “conclude, that we are compounded of material and immaterial substance \*.” That “immaterial spirits, considered as distinct substances, are in truth the creatures of metaphysics and theology †.” That human pride “was indulged by heathen philosophers and “Platonic Christians; and since they could “not make man participant of the divine nature “by his body, they thought fit to add a distinct “spiritual to his corporeal substance, and to “assume him to be a compound of both ‡.” And that “the notions that prevail about soul, “spiritual substance, and spiritual operations “and things, took their rise in schools, where “such doctrines were taught as men would be “sent to *Bedlam* for teaching at this day ||.” He has a long marginal note, Vol. III. p. 514, *et seq.* which is particularly designed to answer

\* Vol. III. p. 363, 364. † *Ib.* p. 427. ‡ *Ib.* p. 480.  
|| Vol. III. p. 534, 535.


LETTER  
VIII.

Mr Wollaston's arguments for the immortality of the soul. He there affirms, that "it neither  
 " has been nor can be proved, that the soul is a distinct substance united to the body:" That to  
 " suppose the soul may preserve a faculty of  
 " thinking when the body is destroyed, is assumed without any evidence from the phenomena; nay, against a strong presumption  
 " derived from them:" That "whilst we are  
 " alive, we preserve the capacity, or rather faculty, of thinking, as we do of moving, and  
 " other faculties plainly corporeal. When we  
 " are dead, all these faculties are dead with us:"—And, as he thinks, "it might as reasonably be said, we shall walk eternally, as  
 " think eternally." He says, "the word soul, in philosophical consideration, taken for a distinct substance united to the body" may be paralleled with "the *primum mobile*, and element  
 " of fire, which were names invented to signify things which have no existence." And adds, that "this fragment of a soul, if it be a  
 " fragment, received strength from the superstitious theology of the heathens \*." He represents the hypothesis of two distinct substances in man as more "unconceivable and absurd than  
 " that of those who say there is no such thing as material substance, or a material world †." And yet he says, "That there is material substance no man can doubt --- and that those  
 " who doubted it have either done it to exercise

\* Vol. III. p. 516, 517, 518. † *Ib.* p. 522.

" their

“ their wit, or have been transported by over-  
 “ heated imaginations into a philosophical deli-  
 “ rium \*.” He pronounces, that for philoso-  
 phers to maintain that the soul is an immaterial  
 being, is as if they should agree “ that twice  
 “ two makes five †.” And though in a passage  
 cited before, he introduces a plain man saying,  
 that as he could not affirm, so he would not  
 deny a future state, yet he makes him declare,  
 that “ revelation apart, all the phenomena from  
 “ our birth to our death seem repugnant to the  
 “ immateriality and immortality of the soul ;  
 “ so that he is forced to conclude with *Lu-*  
 “ *cretius*,

LETTER  
 VIII.  


——— *Quique pariter cum corpore, et una  
 Crescere sentimus, pariterque senescere mentem.*

“ That God had given him reason to distinguish  
 “ and judge, and external and internal sense,  
 “ by which to perceive and reflect ; but that  
 “ this very reason shewed him the absurdity of  
 “ embracing an opinion concerning body and  
 “ mind, which neither of these senses sup-  
 “ ports ‡.”

I believe you will be of opinion upon consi-  
 dering what has been now produced, that Lord  
*Bolingbroke* has left us little room to doubt of  
 his real sentiments in this matter, I shall now  
 examine whether he has offered any thing that  
 is really of force sufficient to invalidate a doctrine,

\* Vol. III. p. 379.    † *Ib.* p. 536.    ‡ *Ib.* p. 557.

LETTER the belief of which he himself acknowledges to  
 VIII. be of great use to mankind.

As to that which lies at the foundation of his scheme, *viz.* his denying that the soul is a spiritual or immaterial substance distinct from the body, I do not find that he has produced any thing which can be called a proof that such a supposition is unreasonable. He indeed inveighs against metaphysicians and divines for talking about spiritual and immaterial essences and substances: He charges them with *fantastical ideas*, and a *pneumatical madness*. But such invectives, which he repeats on all occasions, will hardly pass for arguments.

He doth not pretend to say, as some have done, that spiritual or immaterial substance implies a contradiction. He blames *Spinoza* for maintaining that there is but one substance, that is matter; and asserts, that “though we do not know the manner of God’s being, yet we acknowledge him to be immaterial, because a thousand absurdities, and such as imply the strongest contradiction, result from the supposition, that the Supreme Being is a system of matter\*.” He says indeed, that “of any other spirit we neither have nor can have any knowledge:” And that “all spirits are hypothetical, but the Infinite Spirit, the Father of Spirits †.” But if there are other beings, whose essential properties are inconsistent with the known properties of matter, and particu-

\* Vol. III. p. 321, 505. † *Ib.* p. 321, 427.



larly if our own souls are so, and if absurd consequences would follow from the supposing them to be material beings, may it not be reasonably argued, that they are substances of a different kind from what we call matter or body? The only way we have, by his own acknowledgment, of knowing different substances is by their different qualities or properties. He observes, that “ sensitive knowlege is not sufficient to know “ the inward constitution of substances, and “ their real essence, but is sufficient to prove “ to us their existence, and to distinguish them “ by their effects \* :” And that “ the complex “ idea we have of every substance is nothing “ more than a combination of several sensible “ ideas, which determine the apparent nature “ of it to us.” He declares, that “ he cannot “ conceive a substance otherwise than relatively “ to its modes, as something in which those “ modes subsist †.” And blames the philosophers for “ talking of matter and spirit as if “ they had a perfect idea of both, when in “ truth they knew nothing of either but a few “ phenomena insufficient to frame any hypothesis ‡.” Yet he himself speaks of material substance, as a thing “ we perfectly know and “ are assured of, whilst we only assume or guess “ at spiritual or immaterial substance ||.” But we have as much reason to be assured of the latter as of the former, since in either case the

LETTER  
VIII.

\* Vol. III. p. 371. † *Ib.* 524. ‡ *Ib.* 509, 510, 512.  
|| *Ib.* p. 509.

LETTER <sup>VIII.</sup> substance or essence itself is the object of our sense, but we certainly infer it from the properties, which we know in the one case as well as in the other. He does not pretend to deny that the existence of spiritual substance is possible \*: Why then should not he allow their actual existence, since there are properties or qualities, from which it may reasonably be inferred; that they actually do exist?

He finds great fault with Mr. *Locke* for endeavouring to shew that the notion of spirit involves no more difficulty or obscurity in it than that of body, and that we know no more of solid than we do of the thinking substance, nor how we are extended than how we think. In opposition to this he asserts, that we have clear ideas of the primary properties belonging to body, which are solidity and extension; but that we have not a positive idea of any one primary property of spirit. And the only proof he brings for this is, that actual thought is not the essence of spirit; but if instead of actual thought being the essence of the soul, the faculty of thinking be supposed to be one of its primary essential qualities or properties, this is what we have as clear an idea of as we have of solidity and extension †. He himself elsewhere observes, that “our ideas  
“ of reflection are as clear and distinct as those  
“ of sensation, and convey knowledge that may  
“ be said to be more real ‡.” And that the ideas  
“ we have of thought by reflection, and of

\* Vol. III. p. 309. † *Ib.* p. 510, 511, 512. ‡ *Ib.* 365.

“ some few modes of thinking, are as clear as LETTER  
 “ those we have of extension, and the modes of VIII.  
 “ extension by sensation \*.” Why then may  
 we not from those ideas infer a thinking, as  
 well as from the other a solid extended sub-  
 stance? And that these substances are absolutely  
 distinct, and of different natures, since their pro-  
 perties manifestly are so? He hath himself ac-  
 knowleged enough to shew the reasonableness  
 of this conclusion. “ That we live, and move,  
 “ and think, saith he, and that there must be  
 “ something in the constitution of our system  
 “ of being beyond the known properties of  
 “ matter to produce such phenomena as these,  
 “ are undeniable truths.” He adds indeed,  
 “ What that something is, we know not ; and  
 “ surely it is high time we should be convinced,  
 “ that we cannot know it †.” But though we  
 cannot describe its intimate essence, we may  
 know enough of it to be convinced, that it is  
 not matter. It is to no purpose to pretend, that  
 there may be unknown properties of matter,  
 by which it may be rendered capable of think-  
 ing. For the properties of matter that we do  
 know are inconsistent with the power of self-  
 motion and consciousness. It is true, that he  
 censures those as *proud dogmatists*, who bestow  
 the epithets of *inert, senseless, stupid, passive*,  
 upon matter ‡.” But in his calmer mood,  
 when he is not carried away by the spirit of op-  
 position, and has not his hypothesis in view, he

\* Vol. III. p. 427. † *Ib.* p. 509. ‡ *Ib.* p. 25.

LETTER  
VIII. owns, that “matter is purely passive, and can  
“act no otherwise than it is acted upon \*.” It  
is therefore inconsistent with its nature to ascribe  
to it a principle of self-motion.

He expressly acknowledges, that “our idea of  
“thought is not included in the idea of mat-  
“ter †.” And that intellect is certainly above  
“the power of motion and figure, according to  
“all the ideas we have of them; and there-  
“fore, saith he, I embrace very readily the opi-  
“nion of those who assume, that God has been  
“pleased to superadd to several systems of mat-  
“ter, in such proportions as his infinite wisdom  
“has thought fit, the power of thinking ‡.”  
This is an hypothesis he seems fond of; he fre-  
quently refers to it, and says it is little less than  
blasphemy to deny it ||. Mr. *Locke*, as he ob-  
serves, supposed, that God might if he pleased,  
give to certain systems of created senseless mat-  
ter, put together as he thinks fit, some degree of  
sense, perception, and thought. But what Mr.  
*Locke* had advanced as barely possible, for  
aught he knew, to almighty power, our author  
assumes as having been actually done, and as  
continually done in the ordinary course of  
things. But I think we may safely leave it to  
any unprejudiced judgment, whether it be not  
more reasonable and more philosophical, to as-  
sign different substances as the subjects of pro-  
perties so intirely different, than to suppose pro-  
perties merely superadded by Omnipotency to

\* Vol. V. p. 472. † Vol. III. p. 364. ‡ Vol. V. p. 35.  
|| Vol. V. p. 364.



substances to which they do not naturally belong? Why should Lord *Bolingbroke* have been so backward to acknowledge a distinct substance from matter as the subject of these properties, when he himself was obliged to acknowledge, that the *idea of thought is not included in the idea of matter*, and that *intellect is above the power of motion and figure according to all the ideas we have of them?* Is it agreeable to the divine wisdom, or to the order of things, to suppose that God, in the general course of his providence, continually superadds preternatural or supernatural properties and powers to things not naturally fitted to receive them, rather than that he hath produced spiritual substances, to which by the original constitution of their natures these properties and powers do belong? It hath been often shewn by those that have treated this subject, that the essential properties of body and spirit are not only distinct, but incompatible, and that therefore they cannot belong to the same substance, but must be the properties of different substances. Matter being a solid, figurable, divisible substance, consisting always of separable, nay of actually separate and distinct parts, it is evident from the very nature of it that it is not one indivisible substance, but is compounded of innumerable little substances, which are really distinct, though contiguous; so that if the intelligent substance in us were corporeal, it would be a compound of many intelligences and consciousnesses, which could not be one and the

LETTER  
VIII.

same individual intelligence and consciousness. Matter therefore is not a subject capable of an individual consciousness, which consequently must have some other subject to reside in. This argument is pursued with admirable clearness and force by the learned Dr. *Clarke* in his letter to Mr. *Dodwell*, and in his several defences of it against Mr. *Collins*, who pushed the argument for the materiality of the soul as far as it could bear. Nor do I find that Lord *Bolingbroke* hath advanced any thing that can be called new upon this subject. He supposes but does not prove all the species of intellectual beings to be material, and talks of an *intellectual spring* common to them all; which, he says, is the same spring in all, but differently tempered, so as to have different degrees of force and elasticity in some from what it has in others; and he resolves the surprizing variety of its effect into the apparent difference in the constitutions or organizations of animals \*. But it is justly argued on the other hand, that it is absurd to suppose, that that which is unintelligent and insensible before organization, can become intelligent and self-conscious by organization, since organization does not alter the nature and essence of things.

These observations seem to me sufficient to take off the force of what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath advanced, to shew that the soul is not an immaterial substance distinct from the body.—

\* Vol. III. p. 526, 527.

His view in it is plain; it is to destroy the proof of its immortality, and to bring in this conclusion, that since it is not a distinct substance from the body, it must die with it. He pretends indeed that the opinion of the soul's immateriality adds no strength to that of its immortality; and blames the metaphysical divines for *clogging the belief of the immortality* of the soul with that of its *immateriality*; and that by *resting too much* on the latter they *weaken* the former\*. But the true reason of his finding fault with it is, that the immateriality of the human soul furnisheth a strong presumption in favour of its immortality, or at least that it may survive when the body is dissolved. That he himself is sensible of this, appears from what he acknowledges, that "on supposition of the soul's being a different substance from matter, philosophers argue admirably well *a priori*, and prove with great plausibility, that this mind, this soul, this spirit, is not material, and is immortal." He urges indeed, that "this assumption cannot stand an examination *a posteriori*†;" that is, as he elsewhere observes, all the phenomena, from our birth to our death seem repugnant to the immateriality and immortality of the soul. But all that these phenomena prove, is not that body and soul are one and the same substance, but that there is a close union between them, which there may be, and yet they may be substances of very different natures; and that they really are

LETTER  
VIII.

\* Vol. III. p. 535, 539.

† *Ib.* p. 509.

LETTER  
VIII.

so appears, as has been already shewn, from their different essential properties. The laws of this union were appointed by the author of the human frame; and by virtue of those laws soul and body have a mutual influence upon one another whilst that union subsists. But it by no means follows, that when this union is dissolved, both these substances, so different from one another, do alike fall into the dust. Nor can this be concluded from the phenomena.—We see indeed what becomes of the fleshy corruptible body, but we cannot pretend to decide that therefore the thinking immaterial substance is dissolved too; or to determine what becomes of it.

But he urgeth, that “ though thinking and  
 “ unthinking substances should be supposed ne-  
 “ ver so distinct from one another, yet as as-  
 “ sumed souls were given to inform bodies,  
 “ both are necessary to complete the human  
 “ system; and that neither of them could exist  
 “ or act in a state of total separation from the  
 “ other \*.” And he observes, that Mr. *Wol-*  
*laston* is so sensible of this, that he supposes  
 that there is besides the body which perishes,  
 some fine vehicle that dwells with it in the brain,  
 and goes off with it at death. Our author has  
 not offered any thing to shew the absurdity of  
 this supposition, except by calling such a vehicle  
 the *shirt of the soul*, and talking of the soul’s  
*flying away in its shirt into the open fields of*

\* Vol. III. p. 517.


*heaven:*



*heaven*: Which may, for aught I know, pass with some persons for witty banter; but has no argument in it. Very able philosophers, both antient and modern, have supposed, that all created spirits are attended with material vehicles. But whatever becomes of this supposition with regard to the human soul, I do not see how it follows that a substance which is essentially active, intellective, and volitive, should lose all intellect, action, and volition, merely on its being separated from a material substance to which it was united, and which is naturally void of these qualities. However it might be bound by the laws of that union for a time, there is no reason to think it should be still subject to those laws, and that it should be unable to act or think at all, after this union is dissolved.

The only thing farther which hath any appearance of argument is, that “if the philosopher asserts, that whatever thinks is a simple being, immaterial, indissoluble, and therefore immortal. — We must be reduced, if we receive this hypothesis, to suppose that other animals besides, have immaterial or immortal souls\*.” And if it be allowed, that other animals have immaterial souls too, I do not see what absurdity follows from it; or why it may not reasonably be supposed, that there may be innumerable gradations of immaterial beings of very different capacities, and intended for different ends and uses. But our author urges

\* Vol. III. p. 528.

LETTER  
VIII.  against those who suppose sensitive souls in brutes, and a rational soul in man, that “ the  
“ power of thinking is as necessary to percep-  
“ tion of the slightest sensation, as it is to geo-  
“ metrical reasoning: And that it manifestly  
“ implies a contradiction to say, that a substance  
“ capable of thought by its nature in one de-  
“ gree or instance, is by its nature incapable of  
“ it in any other\*.” But I see not the least ab-  
surdity in this; except it be said, that it necessa-  
rily follows that a substance capable of thought  
or sense in the lowest degree, must be essentially  
capable of thought or sense in the highest degree.  
I can easily conceive that a nature may be sup-  
posed capable of the former, and not of the  
latter. And must not he say so too, since he  
asserts, that brutes think, and yet I believe will  
hardly affirm that they are capable as well as  
men of geometrical reasoning? There is no ab-  
surdity in supposing immaterial souls, which  
have sensitive perceptions, and are capable of sen-  
sitive happiness, without ever rising beyond this,  
or being properly capable of moral agency. And  
supposing the brutes to have immaterial sensitive  
souls which are not annihilated at death, what  
becomes of them after death, whether they are  
made use of to animate other bodies, or what is  
done with them, we cannot tell. Nor is our  
not being able to assign an use for them so much  
as a presumption that they answer no end at all,  
or that they do not exist. There may be a thou-

\* Vol. III. 531.

and ways which the Lord of nature may have LETTER  
of disposing of them, which we know nothing of. VIII.

It appears from what hath been offered, that there is a real foundation in reason for the doctrine of the soul's immortality, and that therefore there is no need to resolve it, as this writer seems willing to do, into the pride of the human heart. It is his own observation, " That  
" men were conscious ever since their race ex-  
" isted, that there is an active thinking principle  
" in their composition — That there are corpo-  
" real natures, we have sensitive knowlege:  
" That there are spiritual natures distinct from  
" all these, we have no knowlege at all. We  
" only infer that there are such, because we  
" know that we think, and are not able to con-  
" ceive how material systems can think \*." And this certainly is a very reasonable inference, as reasonable as it is to infer a material substance from the affections and properties of matter.

It is proper to observe here, that our author hath acknowledged several things which furnish a very reasonable presumption in favour of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. One is, the universal prevalence of that doctrine ~~x~~ from the eldest antiquity. For this seems to shew, that it is agreeable to the natural sentiments of the human mind; or at least that it was derived from a primitive universal tradition

\* Vol. III. p. 536.

LETTER  
VIII.

received from the first ancestors of the human race, and which was originally owing to divine revelation. Both these may probably have contributed to the general spreading of this notion. This writer, according to his custom, varies on this head. For after having expressly asserted, that this doctrine was *inculcated from time immemorial*, and that it *began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity* \*; he pretends to assign the original of it, and ascribes the invention of it to *Egypt*, and that it came from thence to the *Greeks*, to whom it was brought by *Orpheus*, and from the *Greeks* to the *Romans* †. But we find it was equally received among the most barbarous as among the most polite nations. The antient *Indians*, *Scythians*, *Gauls*, *Germans*, *Britons*, as well as *Greeks* and *Romans*, believed that souls are immortal, and that men should live in another state after death. There were scarce any among the *Americans*, when the *Europeans* first arrived there, who doubted of it. It has been almost as generally believed as the existence of God; so that it may well pass for a common notion.

Another thing taken notice of by this writer, and to which he partly ascribes the belief of the soul's immortality, is what he calls *the powerful desire of continuing to exist*. He observes, that this desire was so strong, that "the multitude in the Pagan world were ready to embrace the hope of immortality, though it

\* Vol. V. p. 237. 308.      † *Ib.* p. 352, 489.



“ was accompanied with the fear of damnation \*.” This strong desire of future existence, appears by his own account to be natural to the human mind. And would the Author of our beings have so constituted us, if the object of this desire was vain, and if there were no future existence to expect? Is not this powerful desire or expectation of immortality, which is implanted in the human heart, an argument that he that made us, formed and designed us not merely for this present state and transitory life, but for a future state of existence?

Lord *Bolingbroke* further observes, that one great cause of the spreading of this doctrine was its being encouraged by the politicians and legislators, as well as philosophers, on the account of its great usefulness to mankind, and because they looked upon it to be necessary to enforce the sanctions of the law of nature †. Now this great usefulness and necessity of this doctrine is no small argument of its truth. For if men are so framed, that they cannot be properly governed without the hopes or fears of a future state; if these are necessary to preserve order and good government in the world, to allure and engage men to virtue, and deter them from vice and wickedness; this shews that the Author of their beings designed them for immortality, and a future state, and that consequently such a state there really is; except it be said, that he formed our natures so as to make it necessary to

\* Vol. V. p. 237. † *Ib.* p. 281, 351.

LETTER govern us by a lie, and by false motives, and  
 VIII. imaginary hopes and fears.

It sufficiently appears from what hath been already observed, that our author by denying that the soul is an immaterial substance distinct from the body, hath done what he could to take away the force of the natural argument for a future state of existence and retributions after this life is at an end: It remains that we take notice of what he hath offered to destroy the moral arguments usually brought for it from the supposed unequal distributions of this present state. He sets himself at great length to prove that the supposition is absolutely false and groundless; that it is highly injurious to God; and tendeth to cast the most blasphemous reflections upon his providence. In the management of this argument he hath broke out into the most opprobrious invectives against the Christian divines and philosophers, whom he abuses and traduces without the least regard to decency. He frequently charges them as in a confederacy with the Atheists; and represents them as “ complaining of the uniform conduct of that  
 “ providence of God which is over all his  
 “ works, and censuring their Creator in the  
 “ government of the world, which he has  
 “ made and preserves.—That they have done  
 “ nothing more than repeat what all the  
 “ Atheists from *Democritus* and *Epicurus* have  
 “ said: That they have pushed their arguments  
 “ on this subject so far, that the whole tribe of  
 “ these

“ these writers, like *Wollaston* and *Clarke*, do in  
 “ effect renounce God, as much as the rankest of  
 “ the Atheistical tribe: And he undertakes to  
 “ prove this, to their shame, to be true \*.” That  
 “ the heathen Theists defended the divine pro-  
 “ vidence against the Atheists who attacked it,  
 “ and recommended a chearful resignation to  
 “ all the dispensations of it; whereas Christian  
 “ divines have made a common cause with the  
 “ Atheists to attack providence, and to mur-  
 “ mur against the necessary submission that  
 “ they pay †.”—That “ the Christian philoso-  
 “ phers far from defending the providence of  
 “ God, have joined in the clamour against it.”  
 — That “ they have brought the self-existent  
 “ Being to the bar of humanity,—and he has  
 “ been tried, convicted, and condemned, like  
 “ the governor of a province, or any other in-  
 “ ferior magistrate ‡.”

Accordingly he sets up as a zealous advocate  
 for the goodness and righteousness of divine  
 providence in the present constitution of things,  
 and with great solemnity undertakes to *plead*  
*the cause of God* against Atheists and Divines.  
 He affirms, that “ notwithstanding the human  
 “ race is exposed to various evils, there is no  
 “ ground for complaint, but abundant cause  
 “ for thankfulness ||.” That “ if we are sub-  
 “ ject to many evils, physical and moral, we  
 “ can shew much more good of both kinds,

\* Vol. V. p. 484, 485. † *Ib.* p. 486. ‡ *Ib.* p. 488.  
 || *Ib.* p. 333, 334.

LETTER “

VIII.



“ which God hath bestowed upon us, or put it into our power to procure to ourselves.”——

That the means to soften or prevent evils, the chief of which he reckons to be hope, are “ so many instances of the positive goodness of God \* :” That “ neither the goodness nor justice of God require that we should be better, nor happier than we are † :” That man “ enjoys numberless benefits by the fitness of his nature to the constitution of the world, unasked, unmerited, freely bestowed ‡ .” He asserts, in opposition to Atheists and Divines, that “ the general state of mankind in the present scheme of providence is not only tolerable, but happy :—— And that there is in this world so much more good than evil, and the general state of mankind is so happy in it, that there is no room for the exaggerated descriptions that have been made of human misery || :” That “ God has made us happy. and has put it into our power to make ourselves happier by a due use of our reason, which leads us to the practice of moral virtue, and to all the duties of society † :” That “ good men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, has, he says, been a subject of invective rather than argument, to *Epicurus*, *Cotta*, and others among the antients, and to eminent divines among the moderns § .” And he particularly examines the instances produced by

\* Vol. V. p. 336.

† *Ib.* p. 512.‡ *Ib.* p. 339.|| *Ib.* p. 392.† *Ib.* p. 384.§ *Ib.* p. 394.



*Cotta* in *Cicero* against the providence of God, and shews what *Balbus* might have answered \*. LETTER  
VIII.

He finds great fault with Dr. *Clarke* for saying, that “ it is certain from the moral attributes of “ God, that there must be such a future state of “ existence, as that by an exact distribution of “ rewards and punishments, all the present disorders and inequalities may be set right, and “ that the whole scheme of providence may appear at its consummation to be a design worthy “ of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness.” See *Clarke’s* Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, Prop. IV. For this he calls him *audacious and vain sophist*: And that, “ according to these men, it appears actually unworthy of them at present †.” And in opposition, as he pretends, to divines, he shews the general tendency of virtue to promote happiness, and of vice to produce misery ‡.

These things he enlarges upon in several of his Fragments and Essays in the fifth volume of his works. See particularly the forty-third, forty-fourth, forty-eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth, fifty-first, fifty-second, fifty-third, and fifty-fourth of those Fragments.

It will be necessary here to make some observations; and a few will be sufficient.


And 1. My first reflection is this, That Lord *Bolingbroke* had no just pretensions to value himself upon being an advocate for the good-

\* Vol. V. p. 404, *et seq.*

† *Ib.* p. 395.

‡ *Ib.* p. 399,

*et seq.*

LETTER <sup>VIII.</sup>  ness and righteousness of divine providence; nor could properly attempt to vindicate it in a consistency with his scheme. He had taken pains to shew, that moral attributes are not to be ascribed to God as distinguished from his physical attributes: That there is no such thing as justice and goodness in God according to our ideas of them, nor can we form any judgment concerning them; and that there are many phenomena in the present course of things which are absolutely repugnant to these moral attributes. But in that part of his book where he undertakes to justify the providence of God in this present state, he not only supposes justice and goodness in God, but that they are conspicuous in the whole course of his dispensations, and that the present state of things is agreeable to our ideas of those attributes. Another consideration which shews his great inconsistency is, that at the same time that he sets up as an advocate for the goodness and justice of providence in this present state, he yet will not allow that providence considers men individually at all, though he himself owns that justice has necessarily a respect to individuals. I had occasion to observe in my last letter, that he asserts, that "justice requires most certainly that rewards  
" and punishments should be measured out in  
" every particular case in proportion to the me-  
" rit and demerit of each individual \*." With what consistency then can he undertake to de-

\* Vol. V. p. 405.

monstrate the justice of providence in this present state, when he makes it essential to justice, that regard should be had to the cases and circumstances of individuals, and yet affirms, that providence in this present state hath no regard to individuals? And he seems to make its not extending to individuals here, an argument that it shall not extend to them in a future state; for he mentions it as an absurdity in the Christian system, that “the proceedings of the future state will be the very reverse of the present;” for that then every individual human creature is to be tried, whereas here they are considered only collectively; that the most secret actions, nay, the very thoughts of the heart, will be laid open, and sentence will be pronounced accordingly \*.” Where he seems to argue, that because individuals are not called to an account, or rewarded and punished here according to their particular merits or demerits; therefore they shall not be so hereafter. Whereas the argument seems to hold strongly the other way, supposing the justice of divine providence; that since justice necessarily requires that a regard should be had to men’s particular actions, cases, and circumstances, and since there is not an exact distribution of rewards and punishments to individuals in this present state, according to the personal merit or demerit of each individual, therefore there shall be a future state, in which this shall be done, and the righteousness of

LETTER  
VIII.

\* Vol. V. p. 494.

LETTER <sup>VII.</sup> providence shall be fully manifested and vindicated. And it cannot but appear a little extraordinary, that this author should make such a mighty parade of his zeal for vindicating the justice of divine providence, when according to his scheme the justice of providence cannot consistently be said to be exercised or display'd, either here or hereafter.

2dly, It is proper farther to observe, that what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered with so much pomp for vindicating the proceedings of divine providence in the present constitution of things, hath nothing in it that can be called new, or which had not been said as well, or better, by Christian divines and philosophers before him. They have frequently shewn, that this present world is full of the effects and instances of the divine goodness: That many of those that are called natural evils are the effects of wise general laws, which are best upon the whole: That the evils of this life are, for the most part, tolerable; and overbalanced by the blessings bestowed upon us, which ordinarily speaking are much superior to those evils: That in the present constitution, virtue has a manifest tendency in the ordinary course of things to produce happiness, and vice misery; and that this constitution is the effect of a wise and good providence, from whence it may be concluded, that the great Author and Governor of the world approves the one, and disapproves the other? So that it may be justly said in general, that good  
and



and virtuous persons enjoy more true satisfaction and happiness, even in this present life, than the bad and vicious. Divines may say much more on this head than this author could consistently do. They maintain a providence which extends even to the individuals of the human race: That good men may consider themselves as continually under God's wise and fatherly care and inspection: That they may regard the good things they enjoy as the effects of his goodness, and are provided with the properest consolations and supports under all the evils of this present life, being persuaded, that God who knoweth their circumstances, will over-rule all these things for their benefit; and that they are part of the discipline appointed to prepare them for a better state; the prospects of which diffuse joy and comfort through all the gloomy scenes of adversity they may have to meet with. But in his scheme there is no solid foundation for that tranquillity of mind, of which he speaks in such high terms as the inseparable companion of virtue, and for that hope, which, he says, gives a relish to all the comforts, and takes off the bitter relish from all the misfortunes of life. If providence doth not concern itself about individuals, the good man hath no effectual support under his calamities. And it is worthy of our observation, that our author himself in vindicating the justice and goodness of providence in this present state, is sometimes obliged to have recourse to the hypothesis of a particular providence.

LETTER  
VIII.

LETTER  
VIII.

providence. Some of the answers he puts into the mouth of *Balbus*, as what he might have opposed to *Cotta's* harangue against providence, proceed upon the supposition of a providence which hath a regard to the cases and circumstances of individuals \*. And with regard to public calamities, one of the ways he takes of accounting for them is this, that “ they “ may be considered as chastisements, when “ there are any to be amended by partaking in “ them, or being spectators of them.—And “ that they should teach mankind to adore and “ fear that providence, which governs the “ world by *particular* as well as general dispensations †.”

A third reflection is this, That though it be very true in general, that in the present constitution of things, virtue hath a manifest tendency to promote our happiness, and vice to produce misery, yet it cannot be denied, that it often happeneth in particular cases, that as to the outward dispensations of providence, there is not a constant and remarkable difference made between the righteous and the wicked here on earth: That persons of eminent virtue have frequently been overwhelmed with evils and calamities of various kinds, and have perished under them, without any recompence of that virtue, if there be no future state: And that wicked men have often been remarkably prosperous, and have met with great success in

\* Vol. V. p. 412.

† *Ib.* p. 380, 381.

their

their undertakings, and have continued prosperous to the end of their lives. These things have been observed in all ages. And accordingly he expressly owns, that “ the antient Theists were persuaded, that nothing less than the existence of all mankind in a future state, and a more exact distribution of rewards and punishments could excuse the assumed, irregular, and unjust proceedings of providence in this life, on which Atheists founded their objections \*.” He frequently intimates, that this was one great reason of the philosophers assuming the doctrine of future rewards and punishments: Though sometimes he seems to contradict this, and to say, that the heathens did not take in the hypothesis of a future state in order to vindicate the conduct of divine providence †. But without endeavouring to reconcile this writer to himself, which it is often impossible to do, we may proceed upon it as a certain thing, that it hath been generally acknowledged in all ages, that good men have been often in a very calamitous condition in this present state, and bad men in very prosperous circumstances. It is true, that as our author observes, we may be deceived, and think those to be good men who are not so: But in many cases we may certainly pronounce, that those who by their actions plainly shew themselves to be bad men, the unjust, the fraudulent, the cruel and oppressive, prosper and flourish, whilst

LETTER  
VIII.

\* Vol. V. p. 308.

† Compare *ib.* 238, 487.

LETTER men whom it were the height of uncharitable-  
 VIII. nefs not to suppose persons of great goodness,  
 integrity, and generous honesty, suffer even by  
 their very virtues, and are exposed to grievous  
 oppression and reproach, without any redress  
 from human judicatories. It is his own obser-  
 vation, that “ there is room for much contin-  
 “ gency in the physical and moral world, un-  
 “ der the government of a general providence,  
 “ and that amidst these contingencies, happi-  
 “ ness, outward happiness at least, may fall to  
 “ the lot of the wicked, and outward unhappi-  
 “ nefs to the lot of good men \*.”

Mr. *Hume* has represented this matter with  
 spirit and elegance in the twenty-first of his  
 moral and political Essays. Where he observes,  
 That “ though virtue be undoubtedly the best  
 “ choice where it can be attained, yet such is  
 “ the confusion and disorder of human affairs,  
 “ that no perfect œconomy, or regular distribu-  
 “ tion of happiness or misery is in this life ever  
 “ to be expected. Not only are the goods of  
 “ fortune, and endowments of the body, un-  
 “ equally distributed between the virtuous and  
 “ the vicious; but the most worthy character,  
 “ by the very œconomy of the passions, doth  
 “ not always enjoy the highest felicity. Though  
 “ all vice is pernicious, the disturbance or pain  
 “ is not measured out by nature with exact  
 “ proportion to the degrees of vice: Nor is the  
 “ man of highest virtue, even abstracting from

\* Vol. V. p. 485.



“ external accidents, always the most happy. A LETTER  
 “ gloomy and melancholy temper may be found VIII.  
 “ in very worthy characters that have a great sense  
 “ of honour and integrity; and yet this alone  
 “ may embitter life, and render a person com-  
 “ pletely miserable. On the other hand, a  
 “ selfish villain may possess a spring and alacrity  
 “ of temper, a certain gaiety of heart, which  
 “ will compensate the uneasiness and remorse  
 “ arising from all the other vices.--- If a man  
 “ be liable to a vice or imperfection, it may  
 “ often happen, that a good quality which he  
 “ possesses along with it, will render him more  
 “ miserable, than if he were completely vicious.  
 “ A sense of shame in an imperfect character, is  
 “ certainly a virtue, but produces great uneasi-  
 “ ness and remorse, from which the abandoned  
 “ villain is entirely free \*.”

Though I lay no great stress on Mr. *Hume's* authority, yet I believe this representation will be acknowledged to be agreeable to observation and experience. And if it be so, what can be more natural or reasonable, than the hypothesis of a future state, where the rewards of virtue and punishments of vice, shall be more equally and regularly proportioned than they can ordinarily be in this present state?

It is hard to produce an instance of grosser calumny and abuse than our author is guilty of, when he advanceth it as a general charge against

\* *Hume's moral and political Essays*, p. 244, 245.

LETTER  
VIII.

the Christian divines, that “ they have made a  
 “ common cause with Atheists to attack provi-  
 “ dence, and to murmur against the necessary  
 “ submission that they pay.” And he gives it  
 as the character of the *Christian*, that “ he  
 “ goes murmuring and complaining thro’ this  
 “ life against the justice of God, and therefore  
 “ deserves little to taste of his goodness in a  
 “ future state \*.” But this is strangely misre-  
 presented. The Christian instructed by the holy  
 Scriptures believes, that God is perfectly just and  
 righteous in all his ways.—He is taught to re-  
 gard all the good things he enjoys as flowing  
 from God’s paternal benignity ; all the evils  
 and afflictions he endures, as ordered and go-  
 verned for the most wise and righteous ends. If  
 there be any thing in the divine dispensations at  
 present, which he cannot well account for, or  
 reconcile, he is far from accusing God, or en-  
 tertaining a hard thought of his justice or good-  
 ness. He believes, that these things are all wisely  
 ordered, or permitted : That they are what may  
 be expected in a state of trial and discipline, and  
 make a part of the scheme of divine providence,  
 which will appear, when the whole comes to  
 be viewed in its proper connection and harmo-  
 ny, to have been ordered with the most perfect  
 wisdom, righteousness, and goodness. This  
 present state only makes a part of the glorious  
 plan ; and they are the persons that defame and  
 misrepresent providence, who are for separating

\* Bolingbroke’s works, Vol. V. p. 486.

and disjointing the admirable scheme. What a strange perversion is it to represent the hope and expectation which Christians entertain of a future state, as arguing a bad temper of mind, and tending to render them unworthy to taste of the divine goodness hereafter! As if it were a fault and a vice to aspire to a state where our nature shall be raised to the perfection of holiness and virtue, where true piety shall receive its proper and full reward, and the glory of the divine perfections shall be most illustriously display'd.

As to the nature and extent of those future rewards and punishments, they will come more properly to be considered when I come to examine the objections he hath advanced against the accounts that are given of them in the Gospel.

The only thing farther which I shall at present take notice of, is the use which he makes of that maxim, That *whatsoever is is right*. He insinuates as if Christian divines were not for acknowledging, that whatsoever God does is right; which he looks upon to be a most certain and important principle; and that upon this principle we ought to rest satisfied, That what is done in this present state is right, without looking forward to a future state, or taking it into the account at all.

For the explaining the principle our author mentions, *Whatsoever is is right*, it must be observed, that it is not to be applied to every particular incident considered independently, and as

LETTER confined to the present moment, without any  
 VIII. dependence on what went before, or follows  
 after. The maxim would not be true or just, taken in this view. The meaning therefore must be, that whatever is, considered as a part of the universal scheme of providence, and taken in its proper harmony and connection with the past and future, as well as with the present appointed course of things, is rightly and firly ordered. Thus, *e. g.* suppose a good man reduced to the greatest misery and distress, and conflicting with the sorest evils and calamities, it is fit he should be so, because considering that even in its connection, and taking in the past and future, it is permitted or appointed for wise reasons, and is therefore best upon the whole: But considered independently, and as no part of the scheme of providence, or as separated from the other parts of that scheme, it is not in itself the best nor fittest. This maxim therefore which this writer makes use of with a view to set aside a future state, is, if understood in that sense in which alone it is true, perfectly consistent with the belief of a future state, and even leadeth us to the acknowledgement of it. If we believe that God always does that which is fittest to be done, and yet meet with some things which we find it hard to reconcile to our ideas of the divine wisdom, righteousness, and goodness, our persuasion, that he always does that which is right, will put us upon endeavouring to reconcile those appearances: And if a probable hypothesis



thesis offers for reconciling them, it is perfectly consistent with the veneration we owe to the Deity to embrace that hypothesis ; especially if it be not arbitrary, but hath a real foundation in the nature of things: And such is the hypothesis of a future state of retributions. There is great reason to believe, that the thinking principle in man is an immaterial substance quite distinct from the body, and which shall not be dissolved with it. And there are many things that seem to shew he was not designed merely for this present transitory life on earth.—The strong desire of immortality so natural to the human mind ; the vast capacities and faculties of the human soul, capable of making an immortal progress in knowlege, wisdom, and virtue, compared with the small advances we have an opportunity of making in this present state ; our being formed moral agents, accountable creatures, which seems plainly to shew, that it was designed by the Author of our beings, and who hath given us a law for the rule of our duty, that we should be hereafter called to an account for our conduct ; of which we have some forebodings in the judgment our own consciences naturally press upon our actions: These and other things that might be mentioned, seem to shew, that man was not designed merely for this present state. And since there are several reasons that lead us to look upon a future state of existence as probable, it is a most natural thought, that then the seeming inequal-

LETTER  
VIII.

LETTER  
VIII.

~~~~~ that the consideration of that state is to be taken in in forming a judgment concerning God's providential dispensations. And if with all this there be an express revelation from God, assuring us of a future state, the evidence is complete, and there is all the reason in the world to draw an argument from that state to solve present contrary appearances.

I am Yours, &c.



LETTER



LETTER IX.

Observations on Lord Bolingbroke's account of the law of nature. He asserts it to be so plain and obvious to the meanest understanding that men cannot be mistaken about it. The contrary shewn from his own acknowledgements. He makes self-love the only original spring from which our moral duties and affections flow: Yet supposes universal benevolences to be the fundamental law of our nature. He declares that we are obliged by the law of nature to place our hope and trust in God, and address ourselves to him. This shewn to be inconsistent with the principles he had advanced. He asserts polygamy to be founded in the law of nature. He will not allow that there is any such thing as natural shame or modesty. The account he gives of the sanctions of the law of nature considered. He admits no sanctions of that law with respect to individuals. The ill consequences of his scheme to the interests of morality and virtue represented.

S I R,

FROM the observations that have been made in the foregoing letters, I think it sufficiently appears that Lord Bolingbroke hath

LETTER
IX.

endeavoured to subvert, or at least to perplex and confound some of the main principles of what is usually called natural religion. I shall now proceed to examine the account he hath given of the law of nature, considered as a rule of duty. He frequently speaks in the highest terms of the clearness, the sufficiency, and perfection of that law. He represents it as the only standing revelation of the will of God to mankind, and which renders every other revelation needless. Very learned and able men have treated of the law of nature: But our author seems not at all satisfied with what they have written on that subject. He says, “they have been more intent
 “ to shew their learning and acuteness, than to
 “ set their subject in a clear and sufficient light:
 “ ---That instead of setting up a light sufficient
 “ to enlighten a large room, they go about with
 “ a small taper, and whilst they illuminate one
 “ corner, darken the rest:—That they puzzle
 “ and perplex the plainest thing in the world,
 “ sometimes by citations little to the purpose,
 “ or of little authority; sometimes by a great
 “ apparatus of abstract reasoning, and by dint
 “ of explanation.—Read *Selden* and *Grotius*,
 “ read *Cumberland*, read *Puffendorf*, if you
 “ have leisure or patience for it.—There are
 “ many curious researches, no doubt, and many
 “ excellent observations in these writers; but
 “ they seem to be great writers on this subject
 “ by much the same right, as he might be called
 “ a great traveller who should go from *London*
 “ to

“ to *Paris* by the *Cape of Good Hope**.” I LETTER
think it is not easy to convey a more contempt- IX.
ible idea of any writers, than he hath here done
of these great men. It is to be supposed there-
fore, that he proposes to lead men a more clear
and direct way to the knowledge of the law of
nature; especially since he hath declared, that
“ all that can be said to any real or useful
“ purpose concerning that law, is extremely
“ plain †.”

Besides occasional passages in which he makes mention of the law of nature, this is the principal subject of several of the Fragments and Essays of which his fifth volume consists, particularly of the third, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and twenty-second, of these Fragments and Essays. But all these together are far from making up any thing that can with the least propriety be called a treatise on the law of nature; and as his Lordship generally seems to think himself above treating things in a methodical way, we are left to collect his sentiments by comparing several parts of his works together, and forming a judgment as well as we can. He has neither distinctly explained the principles of that law, nor pursued those principles to their regular consequences, nor formed any deductions from them that can be of any great use for the direction and instruction of mankind.

* Vol. V. p. 68. † *Id.* p. 67.

LETTER

IX.



As to the law of nature in general, he tells us, that “the law of nature is the law of reason, “ A right use of that faculty which God has “ given us, collects that law from the nature “ of things, as they stand in the system which “ he has constituted*.” Or, as he elsewhere expresseth it, “ It is a law which God has given “ to all his human creatures, enacted in the con- “ stitution of their natures, and discernible by “ the use of the faculties he has given them †.” He calls it “ the revelation God has made of his “ will by his works. And what is the will of “ God, saith he, is a question easily answered. “ To answer this we need go no higher than the “ moral obligations that arise in our own system, “ and of which we have very adequate ideas. “ The nature of the human system is indepen- “ dent on man, and yet he is obliged to derive “ the rules of his conduct from it. By employ- “ ing our reason to collect the will of God from “ the fund of our nature physical and moral, and “ by contemplating frequently and seriously the “ laws that are plainly and necessarily deducible “ from them, we may acquire not only a par- “ ticular knowlege of those laws, but a general, “ and, in some sort, an habitual knowlege of “ the manner in which God is pleased to ex- “ ercise his supreme power in this system, be- “ yond which we have no concern ‡.”

* Vol. V. p. 83. § *Ib.* p. 99. † *Ib.* p. 100. See also
Ib. p. 154. 178. 196. 271.

This law he represents as absolutely certain, and obvious to all mankind. “ Natural revelation, for so, saith he, I will call it, produces knowledge, a series of intuitive knowledge from the first principles to the last conclusions. The phenomena of nature are the first principles: And reason, *i. e.* a real divine illumination, leads us from one necessary truth to another, through the whole course of these demonstrations.—In all these cases we know, we do not believe*.” He asserts, that “ we more certainly know the will of God in this way than we can know it in any other†.” And that “ the tables of the natural law are hung up in the works of God, and are obvious to the sight of all men, so obvious that no man who is able to read the plainest characters can mistake them‡.” And accordingly he declares, that “ the will of God signified by the law of nature, and revealed by his works, is a revelation that admits of no doubt, and shews the road to happiness to all mankind§.” I shall only mention one passage more, among many that might be produced to the same purpose. Having asserted, that “ natural religion is the original revelation which God has made of himself, and of his will, to all mankind in the constitution of things, and in the order of his providence ;” he observes, that “ human reason is able to

LETTER
IX.

* Vol. IV. p. 276.
§ *Ib.* p. 196.

† *Ib.* p. 287.

‡ Vol. V. p. 153.

LETTER
IX.

“ discover in the original revelation every conceivable duty that we owe to God as our Creator, and to man as our fellow-creature: That this system of duty is fully proportioned by infinite wisdom to the human state, and to the end of it human happiness. — Natural religion therefore is relatively perfect: It is immutable: As long as God and man continue to be what they are, and to stand in the same relations to one another.” He adds, “ if it does not follow necessarily from this, sure I am that it follows probably, that God has made no other revelation of himself and of his will to mankind *.” This is evidently the main point our author had in view in extolling so mightily as he has done the absolute perfection, certainty and clearness of the law of nature.

From the several passages which have been produced, it appears, that by the law of nature he understands what we may collect by our reason concerning the will of God, and our duty, from the consideration of his works, but especially from the constitution of the human system, or as he expresseth it, from the fund of our nature, physical and moral. Let us therefore enquire what account he gives of the human system. He observes, that “ man has two principles of determination, affections, and passions, excited by apparent good, and reason, which is a sluggard, and cannot be so excited. Reason

* Vol. V. p. 543, 544.

“ must

“ must be willed into action; and as this can
 “ rarely happen, when the will is already de-
 “ termined by affections and passions, so when
 “ it does happen a sort of composition generally
 “ happens between the two principles: And
 “ if the affections and passions cannot govern
 “ absolutely, they obtain more indulgence from
 “ reason than they deserve; or than she would
 “ shew them if she were entirely free from their
 “ force, and free from their conduct §.” He
 expressly declares, that “ the appetites, passions,
 “ and the immediate objects of pleasure will
 “ be always of greater force to determine us
 “ than reason ||.” And that “ amidst the con-
 “ tingencies that must arise from the consti-
 “ tution of every individual, he needs not go
 “ about to prove that the odds will always
 “ be on the side of appetite; from which af-
 “ fections arise, as affections grow up after-
 “ wards into passions, which reason cannot al-
 “ ways subdue in the strongest minds, and by
 “ which she is perpetually subdued in the
 weakest ‡” At the same time that he speaks in
 such strong terms of the great power and pre-
 valency of the appetites and passions, he will not
 allow that the Creator hath implanted in the
 human mind any thing that can be called a na-
 tural sense of good and evil, of right and wrong.
 He treats those as enthusiasts in ethics, and as
 rendering natural religion ridiculous, who main-
 tain that there is “ a moral sense or instinct, by

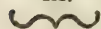
LETTER
IX.

§ Vol. V. p. 150. See also *Ib.* p. 116. 137. 227. || *Ib.*
 p. 267, 268. ‡ *Ib.* p. 479.

“ which

LETTER

IX.



“ which men distinguish what is morally good
 “ from what is morally evil, and perceive an
 “ agreeable or disagreeable intellectual sensation
 “ accordingly*.” “ This, he says, may be ac-
 “ quired in some sort by long habit, and by
 “ true philosophical devotion, but that it is
 “ whimsical to assume it to be natural‡.”

And now we may form some judgment, how far our author's declarations concerning the absolute clearness, as well as certainty, of the law of nature are to be depended on which he makes with a view to shew that all extraordinary revelation is entirely needless.

He tells us, that “ the law of nature has all the clearness, all the precision that God can give, or man desire.” Which he proves, because “ the nature of our system, as far as the morality of actions is concerned, is sufficiently known to us, and the laws of our nature consequently, since they result from it||.” It is to be observed, that the clearness and precision he here attributes to the law of nature is supposed by him to be of such a kind as to be obvious to all mankind. And the only way he allows to any of the human race for knowing that law and his own duty, is by sending him for information concerning it to the works of God, and especially to the human system, and the laws that result from it. And is this so easy a task to every man, even the most illiterate? Can it be said that this is, as he affirms, “ intel-

* Vol. V. p. 86.

‡ *Ib.* p. 479.|| *Ib.* p. 96, 97.

“ligible at all times, and in all places alike, LETTER
“and proportioned to the meanest understand- IX.

ing?” Is every man well qualified to search into the *fund of his nature physical and moral*; and to form his conclusions accordingly, and draw up a system of religion, of laws and rules for his own conduct? How can he consistently suppose, that the human system is sufficiently known to all, when according to him some of the wisest men in all ages, and mankind in general, have been mistaken even in a point of such importance relating to it, as the supposing the soul to be a distinct substance from the body? Besides which, the knowledge of the human system takes in a due consideration of our senses, reason, appetites, and passions. All these must be considered, that we may know wherein consisteth the proper order and harmony of our powers, which of them are to be subordinate, and which to govern; what are the just limits of our appetites and passions; how far, and in what instances they are to be gratified, and how far restrained. And is every particular person, if left to himself, able by the mere force of his own reason to consider and compare all these? and from thence to make the proper deductions, and acquire a *particular knowledge*, as our author requires, of those laws that are deducible from this system?

He has another remarkable passage to the same purpose which it may be proper to take some notice of. “Whether the word of God, saith

LETTER “

IX.



“ he, be his word, may be, and hath been disputed by Theists: But whether the works of God be his works, neither has been nor can be disputed by any such. Natural religion therefore being founded on human nature, which is the work of God, and the necessary conditions of human happiness, which are imposed by the whole system of it, every man who receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, and not on the authority of other men known or unknown, and in their natural state as fallible as himself. It is not communicated to him only by tradition and history: It is a perpetual standing revelation, always made, always making, and as present in these days as in the days of *Adam* to all his offspring*.” Here every man is directed, in forming a scheme of the law of nature for himself, to despise all other authority, and rely wholly on his own. It is even mentioned as an advantage, that he receives it on his own authority, *i. e.* that he has no other proof or authority for it, but the deductions he himself forms by his own reason: Though that reason is, as this writer owns, for the most part influenced and overborne by the appetites and passions. And this is cried up as a standing revelation to all the sons of *Adam*. But if we apply this magnificent talk concerning the divine certainty and clearness of the law of nature, to what our author plainly intends by it, the de-

* Vol. V. p. 92.

ductions drawn by every man for himself concerning his duty, and what he thinks most conducive to his happiness, the fallacy of his way of arguing will immediately appear. For though the works of God are certainly the works of God, and it will not be denied that the human nature is his work, it doth not follow that the conclusions formed by every particular person from that nature, and from the works of God concerning duty and moral obligation, are to be certainly depended upon. When therefore he asserts, that "the contents of the law of nature are objects of such a certainty, as the author of nature alone can communicate*," if the design be to signify, that the judgment every man forms for himself by his own reason, and upon his own authority, as he expresseth it, concerning the law of nature, hath such a divine certainty in it, it is manifestly false. He confounds the objective certainty of the law as founded in the nature of things, with the certainty of the judgment men form concerning it: Which are very different things. However certain the law of nature is in itself, men may greatly mistake and misapprehend it. And it is certain in fact that they do stand in great need of particular instruction to enable them to acquire a right knowledge of it. And surely a divine instruction concerning it by persons extraordinarily sent and commissioned to publish a revelation of the will of God to mankind, and who give sufficient proofs of

LETTER
IX.

* Vol. V. p. 93.

LETTER their divine mission, must be of the highest ad-
IX. vantage.

This writer himself, though he so often extols the absolute clearness, certainty, and perfection of the law of nature, *i. e.* of the judgment men form by reason concerning it; yet at other times makes acknowledgements which quite destroy the argument he would draw from it against the necessity or usefulness of extraordinary revelation: He had affirmed in a passage cited above, that “natural revelation, for so, “ says he, I will call it, produces a series of intuitive knowlege from the first principles to “ the last conclusions.” Where he seems to make both the great principles of the law of nature, and the conclusions that are drawn from it, to be infallibly certain. And yet he elsewhere declares, that the laws of nature are general, and intimates that a multitude of false deductions, and wrong applications have been often made of that law *. Among several passages to this purpose there is one that deserves particular notice. After having said, that “ it “ is in vain to attempt to know any thing more than God has shewed us in the actual constitution of things;” he adds, that “ even when we judge “ of them thus, and make particular applications “ of the general laws of nature, we are very “ liable to mistakes.—That there are things “ fit and unfit, right and wrong, just and unjust “ in the human system, and discernible by hu-

* Vol. V. p. 154.

" man reason, as far as our natural imperfections LETTER
 " admit, I acknowlege most readily. But from IX.
 " the difficulty we have to judge, and from the
 " uncertainty of our judgments in a multitude
 " of cases which lie within our bounds, I
 " would demonstrate the folly of those who af-
 " fect to have knowlege beyond them. They
 " are unable on many occasions to deduce from
 " the constitution of their own system, and the
 " laws of their own nature, with precision and
 " certainty, what these require of them; and
 " what is right or wrong, just or unjust for
 " them to do *." To this may be added the
 acknowledgement he hath made, that " the
 " law of nature is hid from our sight by all the
 " variegated clouds of civil laws and customs.
 " Some gleams of true light may be seen thro'
 " them: But they render it a dubious light, and
 " it can be no better to those who have the
 " keenest sight, till those interpositions are re-
 " moved †." So that after all his boasts, as if
 the law of nature were so clear and obvious to
 all men that they cannot mistake it, he owns it
 to have been *hid from our sight*, by the clouds
 of civil laws and customs, and that it is render'd
 a *dubious light*, even to those *who have the*
keenest sight. And surely nothing can be more
 proper to remove and dispel these interpositions
 of contrary laws and customs, than the light
 of divine revelation enforced by a divine au-
 thority. He himself observes, that " *Eusebius*

* Vol. V. p. 444. † *Ib.* p. 105.

LETTER
IX.

“ in his first book of his evangelical preparation
 “ gives a long catalogue of absurd laws and
 “ customs, contradictory to the law of nature
 “ in all ages and countries ; for a very good
 “ purpose, to shew in several instances, how
 “ such absurd laws and customs as these have
 “ been reformed by the Gospel, that is, by a
 “ law which renewed and confirmed the ori-
 “ ginal law of nature*.”

These observations may suffice with regard to what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered concerning the law of nature in general, and its absolute certainty and clearness to all mankind : I shall now proceed to make some more particular reflections on the account he gives of the contents of that law, or the duties which are there prescribed : As also of the grounds of the obligation of that law, and the sanction whereby it is enforced

I. With regard to the contents or matter of the law of nature, he observes, that “ self-love
 “ directed by instinct to mutual pleasure, made
 “ the union between man and woman. Self-
 “ love made that of parents and children : Self-
 “ love begat sociability : And reason a principle
 “ of human nature as well as instinct, improved
 “ it ; and extended it to relations more remote,
 “ and united several families into one commu-
 “ nity, as instinct had united several individuals
 “ into one family.” See the third of his *Fragments and Essays* in his fifth volume. And he

* Vol. V. p. 100, 101.

treats this more largely in the sixth of those Essays, LETTER
IX. where he observes, that “there is such a thing
“ as natural reason implanted in us by the author
“ of our nature ; but that reason would come
“ too slowly to regulate the conduct of human
“ life, if the All-wise Creator had not implanted
“ in us another principle, that of self-love ;
“ which is the original spring of human actions,
“ under the direction of instinct first and reason
“ afterwards*.” — “ That instinct and reason
“ may be considered as distinct promulgations
“ of the same law. Self-love directs necessarily
“ to sociability — Instinct leads us to it by the
“ sense of pleasure, and reason confirms us in
“ it by a sense of happiness. — Sociability is
“ the foundation of human happiness: Society
“ cannot be maintained without benevolence,
“ justice, and other social virtues. Those vir-
“ tues therefore are the foundation of society.
“ And thus are we led from the instinctive to
“ the rational law of nature. — Self-love ope-
“ rates in all these stages. We love ourselves,
“ we love our families, we love the particular
“ societies to which we belong. And our be-
“ nevolence extends at last to the whole race of
“ mankind. Like so many different vortices
“ the center of all is self-love: And that which
“ is the most distant from it is the weakest ||.”

It appears from this account of the law of na-
ture, that he makes self-love to be the *original*
spring of all human actions, the fundamental

* Vol. V. p. 79.

§ *Ib.* p. 80, 81.

|| *Ib.* p. 82.

LETTER
IX.

principle of the law of nature, and center of the moral system to which all the lines of it tend, and in which they terminate. And yet he elsewhere calls "universal benevolence, benevolence to all rational beings, the great and fundamental principle of the law of nature*." And asserts, that "the first principle of the religion of nature and reason is a sociability that flows from universal benevolence†." In the passages above cited, he had expressly affirmed that self-love begets sociability, and had resolved benevolence into self-love as the original principle from which it flows. But here he makes sociability to flow from universal benevolence. I do not well see how this can be made to consist upon his scheme. Those may justly regard universal benevolence as a fundamental law of our nature, who suppose a social principle, and a benevolent disposition, distinct from self-love, to be an original disposition, natural to the human heart, and implanted by the author of our beings: But if self-love be, as he represents it, the only original spring of human actions, and the center of the whole system, universal benevolence cannot be properly represented as the fundamental law of our nature. Upon this scheme the private interest of the individual, whenever it happens to come in competition with the public good, ought to be preferred. Lord *Bolingbroke* endeavours to answer *Carneade's* argument against justice, who urged,

* Vol. IV. p. 282. Vol. V. p. 98. † *Id.* p. 196.

that

that "either there is no such thing as justice, or
 "it would be extremely foolish, because that
 "in providing for the good of others, the just
 "would hurt themselves*." This argument
 seems to me to be conclusive upon his Lordship's
 scheme. For supposing, which seems to be his
 sentiment, that there is no natural sense of right
 and wrong, of moral beauty and deformity im-
 planted in the human heart: And that at the
 same time a man is persuaded that providence has
 no regard to individuals, to their actions, or the
 events which befall them; and that therefore he
 has nothing to hope or to fear from God; and
 that this life is the whole of his existence: And
 if he is also made to think, that self-love is the
 original spring of human actions, and the cen-
 tral point to which all must tend: And that a
 tendency to promote his own happiness, his pre-
 sent happiness, is what gives the law of nature
 its obligation, which as shall be shewn is what
 Lord *Bolingbroke* avows: Upon these principles,
 if in any particular instance an unjust action may
 turn to his own advantage, and he knows he is
 safe in committing it, he is justified in doing that
 action when a strict regard to justice, or fidelity
 to his word and promise would do him hurt.
 For his present advantage and interest in this un-
certain life is what he is to have principally in
view, and to which every thing else must be
subordinate.

* Vol. V. p. 107.

LETTER
IX.

In the eleventh of his Fragments and Essays, in which he particularly treats of sociability, he observes, that “it is owing to our being determined by self-love to seek our pleasure and utility in society—And that when these ends are sufficiently answered, natural sociability declines, and natural insociability commences. The influence of self-love reaches no farther: And when men are once formed into societies, those societies become individuals, and thus self-love which promoted union among men promotes discord among them*.” So that according to him, self-love first produces sociableness, and puts men upon forming societies; and when societies are once formed, this same self-love produces unsociableness and discord between those societies. And if this be the case, I cannot see how he can maintain, as he sometimes does, that universal benevolence flows from self-love, when according to his account of it, it is only a very limited sociableness which is produced by self-love; and self-love instead of promoting an universal benevolence, destroys it.

With regard to the particular duties included in the law of nature, there is little in these Essays, that can be of use, either to shew, what those duties are, or how they are deducible from that law. What he saith on this head is for the most part very general.

As to the duties we owe to God, he observes, that “the religion and law of nature shews us

* Vol. V. p. 115.

“ the Supreme Being manifested in all his works LETTER IX.
 “ to be the true and only object of our adoration :
 “ And that it teaches us to worship him in spi-
 “ rit and in truth, that is, inwardly and sin-
 “ cerely,” But he seems to confine the worship
 prescribed in that law to inward worship. He
 adds, that “ in the existence God has given us,
 “ and in the benefits which attach us strongly
 “ to it, this shews him to be the first and greatest
 “ object of our gratitude : And in the established
 “ order of things, subject to so many vicissi-
 “ tudes, and yet so constant ; this religion shews
 “ him to be the reasonable as well as necessary
 “ object of our resignation : And finally, in the
 “ wants, distresses, and dangers which those vi-
 “ cissitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the
 “ comfortable object of our hope—in which
 “ hope, the religion of nature will teach us no
 “ doubt to address ourselves to the Almighty,
 “ in a manner consistent with an entire resigna-
 “ tion to his will, as some of the heathens did*.”
 These are undoubtedly important duties. But
 it is not easy to see what place there is for make-
 ing God the comfortable object of our hope in
 the wants, distresses, and dangers we are exposed
 to, or for addressing ourselves to him in an en-
 tire resignation to his will and to his providence,
 if he exerciseth no care of individuals at all, nor
 concerneth himself about their actions, their
 particular cases and circumstances in this present
 state, nor will ever recompence their piety and

* Vol. V. p. 97, 98.

LETTER virtue in a future one. The scheme our author
 IX. hath advanced on these heads appeareth to me to
 be absolutely inconsistent with what he himself
 here representeth as important duties of the law
 of nature.

As to other particular duties required in that law, he says, "No doubt can be entertained
 " whether the law of nature forbids idolatry,
 " blasphemy, murder, theft, and I think incest,
 " at least in the highest instance of it*." These things he only mentions; but that which he most largely insists upon as a precept of the law of nature is polygamy. This is the subject of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth of his Fragments and Essays. The principal argument which he brings to prove that polygamy is agreeable to the law of nature, and is a duty bound upon us by that law, is that it contributes to the increase and propagation of the human species. He owns that "Monogamy, or the confinement
 " of one husband to one wife while they both
 " live, will unite the care of both parents in
 " breeding up subjects of the commonwealth;" but he asserts, that "it will not serve as effectually
 " nor in as great numbers, to the begetting
 " them†." But it would not be a hard matter to shew that polygamy, if universally allowed, and it must be so if it were a law of nature, would not tend to the increase of mankind upon the whole, but the contrary||. Seeing if one man


* Vol. V. p. 156. † *Ib.* p. 163. || See concerning this the Rev. Dean Delany's excellent reflections on Polygamy.

had many wives several men must be without any, considering that providence has ordered such an equality in numbers between the sexes, and that, as hath been observed by those who have examined this matter with the greatest accuracy, there are generally more men born into the world than women. This shews that in the order of nature, and according to the present constitution of things, more than one woman is not ordinarily designed for one man. And I believe it will scarce be denied to be probable, that twenty men married to twenty women would have more children among them, than one man married to twenty women. The constant ordinary course of providence throughout the world with respect to the proportion between the sexes, is, as *Moses* represents it to have been in the beginning, one man to one woman. And it is observable that according to his account, polygamy had no place either at the first original of the human race, or at the reparation of mankind immediately after the deluge, though in both these cases the speedy multiplication of the human species seemed to be necessary. If therefore we judge, as Lord *Bolingbroke* would have us judge, of the law of nature by the constitution of our system, monogamy is more agreeable to that law, and a more perfect institution than polygamy. But I shall have occasion to resume this subject, when I come to consider his observations against the Christian law on this account.

LETTER
IX.

LETTER

IX.

 I do not find that he any where represents adultery as a violation of the law of nature. He rather intimates the contrary, when he gives it as a reason why in *Greece* and *Rome*, and several other states, a plurality of wives was prohibited, and monogamy encouraged, "because" notwithstanding their entering into single marriages, nothing hindered them, nor their wives "neither, except the want of opportunity, from" indulging their lust with others in spite of their "sacred bonds, and the legal property they" had in one another's persons." And he thinks it cannot be doubted that such considerations have the same effect upon Christians, who look upon those marriages to have been instituted by God himself*. But I am persuaded the ancient *Pagans* would not have alleged or admitted the reason he gives for reconciling them to single marriages: As if no man or woman entered into the marriage-bond, but with a resolution to violate it as often as an opportunity offered. If that had been the case, adultery would not have been so infamous a thing, nor so severely punished, as it was in the best ages of *Greece* and *Rome*. Nor were adulteries common among them, till an universal dissoluteness and corruption of manners prevailed, which prepared things by degrees for the dissolution of their state. He plainly supposes all men and women to be unchaste; and that there is no such thing as conjugal fidelity and chastity either among heathens or Christians.

* Vol. V. p. 167.

Such a way of representing things is generally LETTER
IX.
looked upon as a suspicious sign of a vicious and corrupt heart, that judges of the rest of mankind by its own depraved inclinations. And that his Lordship had no great notion of the virtue or obligation of chastity, farther appears from the account he gives of “the motives of that modesty, with which almost all mankind, even the most savage, conceal the parts, and remove out of sight to perform the act, of generation.” He says, “the latent principle of this shame or modesty, is a vanity inherent in our natures, which makes us fond of shewing how superior we are to other animals, and to hide how much we participate of the same nature.” As if the savage nations carried their refinements so far, which would be an argument against eating in open view, since in this we equally participate of the same nature with other animals. He adds, that “an uncontrouled and undisturbed indulgence to their mutual lust, is one of the principal reasons for the solitude wherein the two sexes affect to copulate.” So that this shame and modesty, which forbids public copulations of human creatures like brutes, is at last resolved into an excessive prevalence of lust. He concludes therefore that “this shame is artificial, and has been inspired by human laws, by prejudice, and the like*.” As to incest, he seems to think the law of nature forbids none but that of the highest kind, *viz.* “the conjunc-

* Vol. V. p. 174.

LETTER
IX.

tion between fathers and daughters, sons and mothers." And whether this is forbidden by that law he is not very positive; but inclines to think it is forbidden; not for any repugnancy or abhorrence in nature to such copulations, which he treats as a pretence that scarce deserves an answer, but because "as parents are the chief magistrates of families, every thing that tends to diminish a reverence for them, or to convert it into some other sentiment, diminishes their authority, and dissolves the order of these little commonwealths §." He mentions nations, "among whom no regard was paid to the degrees of consanguinity and affinity, but brothers mixed with sisters, fathers with their daughters, and sons with their mothers:— That they were had in abomination by the Jews, who were in return held in contempt by them and all others:—That two of these nations, the *Egyptians* and *Babylonians*, had been masters of the *Jews* in every sense, and from whom the *Greeks* and *Romans* derived all their knowledge; and perhaps the first use of letters ||." And he observes, that "*Eve* was in some sort the daughter of *Adam*. She was literally bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh." This seems to be mentioned by him with a design to give some sort of patronage for the conjunction between fathers and daughters. But *Eve* could with no propriety be called the daughter of *Adam*; though they might both

§ Vol. V. p. 175. || *Ib.* p. 172, 173, 175.

be

be called the children of God: *Adam* did not beget or form *Eve*, but God formed them both †. LETTER
IX.

He concludes, that “*increase and multiply*” is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept shall be executed with the greatest advantage to society, is the law of man.” So that the only law of nature that he allows in this case, is the natural instinct to increase and multiply. Fornication, adultery, incest, are all left at large to political considerations, and human laws, and to what men shall think most for their pleasure and the propagation of the species, without any divine law to restrain or regulate them: Which is to open a wide door for a licentious indulgence to the carnal appetite.

The last thing I proposed to consider with regard to Lord *Bolingbroke's* account of the law of nature is the ground of the obligation of that law, and the sanctions whereby it is intorced.

As to the ground of its obligation, or from whence the obliging force of that law arises, he observes, that that which makes it properly obligatory is not its being the will and appointment of God, but its being conducive to human happiness. To this purpose he declares, that “tho’ the Supreme Being willed into existence this system, and by consequence all the relations of things contained in it; yet it is not this will, it is in truth the constitution of the system alone, that imposes these laws on man-

† Vol. V. p. 176.

LETTER IX. “ kind originally, whatever power made this
 “ system.”——“ The morality of actions, he
 “ thinks, doth not consist in this, that they are
 “ prescribed by will, even by the will of God :
 “ But it is this, that they are the means, how-
 “ ever imposed the practice of them may be,
 “ of acquiring happiness agreeable to our na-
 “ ture.” And he seems to find fault with those
 who “ think there can be no law of nature, or
 “ at least that it cannot pass for a law in the
 “ sense of obliging and binding, without a
 “ God :” Though he owns, “ that it is more
 “ fully and effectually so to the Theist, than to
 “ the Atheist *. But though he has here expressly
 declared, that it is not the will of God, but it
 is the constitution of the human system, which
 imposes these laws originally on mankind ; yet
 afterwards in opposition to *Grotius* he asserts the
 law of nature to be the *positive law of God in
 every sense, a law of will*; and blames that great
 man, and others, for distinguishing between the
 law of nature, and the positive law of God to
 man †.

With regard to the sanctions of the law of
 nature, he expressly affirms, that the penalties
 which make the sanction of natural law, affect na-
 tions collectively, not men individually ‡. This
 is not an occasional thought, but is a fixed part
 of his scheme, and which he frequently repeats §.

* Vol. IV. p. 283, 284. † Vol. V. p. 87. ‡ *Ib.* p. 90.
 § See particularly Vol. IV. p. 288. Vol. V. p. 472, 474, 494,
 495.

The only penalties or sanctions which he allows properly to belong to the law of nature, are the public evils which affect nations. With regard to particular persons there are no divine sanctions to enforce that law. But the punishment of individuals is left wholly to the laws enacted by every community. And it is certain that there are many breaches of the natural law, which do not make men liable to any punishment by the civil laws. There is no punishment provided by those laws, nor any, according to our author's account, by the law of nature, for secret crimes however enormous. Nor do these laws ever punish internal bad dispositions, any vices of the heart, or irregular and corrupt affections. A man may be safely as wicked as he pleases, provided he can manage so as to escape punishment by the laws of his country, which very bad men, and those that are guilty of great vices, may easily, and frequently do, evade. No other penalties has he to fear (for I do not find that he ever reckons inward remorse or stings of conscience, among the sanctions of the natural law) except he happens to be involved in national calamities; among which he mentions *oppression, famine, pestilence, wars, and captivities*; and in these it often happens, that good men as well as the wicked and vicious are involved. So that he allows no punishments as proper divine sanctions of the law of nature, but what are common to those that keep that law, as well as to those who violate it. All

LETTER
IX.

LETTER IX. that he offers to prove, that this divine sanction, as he calls it, of the natural law is sufficient, amounts to this, that the sanctions of the law of *Moses*, which is pretended to be a positive law given by God to his chosen people consisted only in temporal pains and penalties, and those only such as affected the nation in general, and not individuals. This, as far as the law of *Moses* is concerned, will be afterwards examined. At present I shall only observe, that it is a strange way of arguing, to endeavour to prove, that the sanction of the law of nature is divine, because it is the same with the sanction of the law of *Moses*, which in our author's opinion, was not divine†.

Allow me, before I conclude this letter, to make a brief representation of that scheme of morality, or of the law of nature, which his principles naturally lead to.

The rule he lays down for judging of the law of nature, or of moral obligation, is this: That man is to judge of it from his own nature, and the system he is in. And man according to his account of him is merely a superior animal, whose views are confined to this present life, and who has no reasonable prospect of existing in any other state. God has given him appetites and passions: These appetites lead him to pleasure which is their only object. He has reason indeed; but this reason is only to enable him to provide and contrive what is most con-

† Vol. V. p. 91.

ducive to his happiness; that is, what will yield him a *continued permanent series of the most agreeable sensations or pleasures*, which is the definition of happiness*. And if no regard be had to futurity, he must govern himself by what he thinks most conducive to his interest, or his pleasure, in his present circumstances. The constitution of his nature is his only guide: God has given him no other; and concerns himself no farther about him, nor will ever call him to an account for his actions. In this constitution his flesh or body is his all: There is no distinct immaterial principle: Nor has he any moral sense or feelings naturally implanted in his heart. And therefore to please the flesh, and pursue its interests, or gratify its appetites and inclinations, must be his principal end. Only he must take care so to gratify them, as not to expose himself to the penalties of human laws, which are the only sanctions of the law of nature for particular persons. He may without any check of conscience debauch his neighbour's wife, when he has an opportunity of doing it safely; and needs be under no restraint to the indulging his lusts from shame or modesty, which is only an *artificial thing*, owing to prejudice or pride. As to the refined sentiments of subjecting the appetites to reason, or the sacrificing a man's own private interest, or that of his family, to the public good of the community, this cannot be reasonably done upon his scheme. It is urged

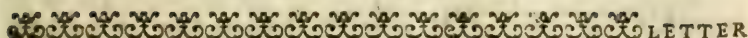
* Vol. V. p. 377, 378.

LETTER IX. indeed, that “ the good of individuals is so
 “ closely connected with the good of society,
 “ that the means of promoting the one cannot
 “ be separated from those of promoting the
 “ other §.” But though it is generally so, yet
 it may happen in particular cases, that these
 interests may be separated. It may be more for
 a man’s private interest to break the laws of his
 country: And if he can find his own private
 advantage, or gratify his ambition, his love of
 power, or of riches, in doing what is prejudicial
 to the community, there is nothing to restrain
 him from it, provided he can do it safely. For
 self-love is the center of the whole moral system,
 and the more extended the circle is the weaker
 it grows. So that the love of a man’s country
 must be far weaker than his love of himself,
 or regard to his own particular interest, which
 must be his supreme governing principle and
 end.

But I shall not pursue this any farther. How
 far such a system of morals would be for the good
 of mankind is easy to see. And it seems to me
 fairly deducible from Lord *Bolingbroke’s* prin-
 ciples taken in their just connection, though I
 do not pretend to charge his Lordship with ex-
 pressly acknowledging or avowing all these con-
 sequences; and sometimes he advances what is
 inconsistent with them.

§ Vol. V. p. 103.

LETTER



LETTER

X.



LETTER X.

An examination of what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered concerning revelation in general. He asserts, that mankind had no need of an extraordinary revelation. The contrary fully shewn. A divine revelation very needful to instruct men in the most important principles of religion, especially those relating to the unity, the perfections, and providence of God; the worship that is to be rendered to him; moral duty taken in its just extent; the chief good and happiness of man; the terms of our acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when we have offended him; and the rewards and punishments of a future state. It may be concluded from the necessities of mankind, that a revelation was communicated from the beginning: A notion and belief of this has very generally obtained. The wisest men of antiquity sensible that bare reason alone is not sufficient to enforce doctrines and laws with a due authority upon mankind. The most celebrated philosophers acknowledged their want of divine revelation. The author's exceptions against this examined. Under pretence of extolling the great effects which a true divine revelation must have produced, he endeavours to shew, that



A View of the DEISTICAL Writers.

no true divine revelation was ever really given. His scheme tends, contrary to his own intention, to shew the usefulness and necessity of divine revelation.

S I R,

ANY one that reads Lord *Bolingbroke's* works with attention must be convinced, that one principal design he had in view, was to destroy the authority of divine revelation in general, and of the *Jewish* and Christian in particular. I shall consider what he hath offered with regard to each of these. And shall begin with what relates to divine revelation in general.

As to the possibility of an extraordinary revelation communicated from God to men, his Lordship hath no where thought fit expressly to deny it: Though he has made some attempts which seem to look that way: He frequently treats the notion of communion with God, and communications from God to men, as a great absurdity, and the supposition of which is wholly owing to the pride of the human heart; and has declared, that he “ cannot comprehend the metaphysical or physical influence of
“ spirits, suggestions, silent communications,
“ injection of ideas. — And that all such interpositions in the intellectual system, cannot
“ be conceived without altering, in every such
“ instance, the natural progression of the human
“ man

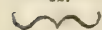
“ man understanding, and the freedom of the
 “ will *.” Yet in a long digression about in-
 spiration, in his *Essay concerning the nature,
 extent, and reality, of human knowledge*, after
 having done what he could to expose and ridi-
 cule it, he expressly owns, that “ an extraordi-
 nary action of God on the human mind,
 “ which the word inspiration is now used
 “ to denote, is not more inconceivable than
 “ the ordinary action of mind on body, or
 “ of body on mind.” — And that “ it is im-
 pertinent to deny the existence of any phe-
 nomenon, merely because we cannot account
 “ for it.” But he urges, that it would be “ silly
 “ to assume inspiration to be true, because God
 “ can act mysteriously, *i. e.* in ways unknown
 “ to us on his creature man †.” Nor was any
 of the divines, whom he treats on all occasions
 with so much contempt, ever so silly, as to as-
 sume inspiration to be true, merely because it
 is possible. The actual truth of it must be
 proved by other arguments.

I shall therefore take it for granted, that an
 extraordinary revelation from God to men for
 instructing and directing them in the knowledge
 of important truth, of his will and their duty,
 is possible: And that such a revelation might be
 so circumstanced, as to be of real and signal ad-
 vantage, our author himself seems sometimes
 willing to allow. After having observed, that

* Vol. V. p. 414, 415.— See concerning this above Let. VII.
 p. 172, 173. † Vol. III. p. 468.

LETTER

X.



we cannot be obliged to believe against reason, he adds, that “ when a revelation hath all the
 “ authenticity of human testimony, when it
 “ appears consistent in all its parts, and when it
 “ contains nothing inconsistent with any real
 “ knowlege we have of the supreme all-perfect
 “ Being, and of natural religion, such a revela-
 “ tion is to be received with the most profound
 “ reverence, with the most intire submission,
 “ and with the most unfeigned thanksgiving *.”
 This goes upon a supposition that an extraordinary revelation from God is not only possible, but may be of signal benefit to mankind; and if really communicated, ought to be received with great thankfulness. And he declares, that he does not “ presume to assert, that God has
 “ made no such particular revelations of his
 “ will to mankind.” Though he adds, that
 “ the opinion that there have been such revela-
 “ tions, is not in any degree so agreeable to
 “ the notions of infinite knowlege and wisdom,
 “ as the contrary opinion †.”

What he principally bends himself to prove, is, that mankind had no need of supernatural revelation; and that therefore it is no way probable, that God would extraordinarily interpose to give such discoveries of his will. For this purpose he mightily extols the absolute clearness and perfection of the law of nature; from whence, he thinks, it follows, “ that God has

* Vol. IV. p. 279. — See also Vol. V. p. 201.

† *Ib.* p. 544.

“ made

“made no other revelation of himself, and of
 “his will to mankind.” Many of the Frag-
 ments and Essays in his fifth volume are particu-
 larly intended to invalidate what Dr. *Clarke* had
 urged to shew the need the world stood in of a
 divine revelation. See particularly from the
 twenty-third to the twenty-eighth of his Frag-
 ments and Essays; as also the thirty-third and
 thirty-fourth. But if we abstract from the over-
 bearing confidence, and assuming air, so fami-
 liar to Lord *Bolingbroke*, we shall find very little
 in those Essays, which is of any consequence
 against what that very learned writer had ad-
 vanced.

The reflections that were made in my last let-
 ter on what his Lordship had offered concerning
 the absolute clearness of the law or religion of
 nature to all mankind, might suffice to shew,
 that there is no just foundation for the inference
 he would draw from it. But it will be proper
 to enter upon a more particular and distinct con-
 sideration of this matter. And to set it in a fair
 light, I shall mention some things of high im-
 portance to mankind, with regard to which they
 stand in great need of particular instruction,
 and of having them cleared and ascertained by
 a divine revelation. Such are the articles re-
 lating to the unity, the perfection, and provi-
 dence of God, the worship that is to be rendered
 to him, moral duty taken in its just extent, the
 chief good and happiness of man, the terms of
 our acceptance with God, and the means of re-
 conciliation

LETTER
 X.


LETTER conciliation when we have offended him, and
 X. the rewards and punishments of a future state.

I. The first and fundamental principle of all religion relates to the unity, the perfections and providence of the one true God, the supreme original cause of all things, the Maker and Governor of the world. This is justly represented by our author as the *angular stone* of religion. And it comes to us confirmed by so many convincing proofs, that one would have been apt to expect that all mankind in all ages should have agreed in acknowledging it. And yet certain it is, that there is scarce any thing in which they have fallen into more pernicious errors, than in their notions relating to this great and fundamental article. This writer finds great fault with Mr. *Locke* for asserting in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, that the heathens were deficient in the first article of natural religion, the knowledge of one God the Maker of all things. And yet this is no more than what Lord *Bohningbroke* himself acknowledges in strong terms. He observes, that “ though the first
 “ men could doubt no more, that some cause
 “ of the world, than that the world itself existed, yet a consequence of this great event,
 “ and of the surprize, ignorance, and inexperience, of mankind must have been much
 “ doubt and uncertainty concerning the first
 “ cause *: That the variety of the phenomena
 “ which struck their sense would lead them to

* Vol. III. p. 253.

“ imagine

“ imagine a variety of causes. — That accord-
 “ ingly polytheism and idolatry prevailed almost
 “ every-where, and therefore seems more con-
 “ formable to human ideas abstracted from the
 “ first appearance of things, and better propor-
 “ tioned by an analogy of human conceptions,
 “ to the uncultivated reason of mankind, and
 “ to understandings not sufficiently informed.”

— He adds, that “ polytheism, and the con-
 “ sequence of it idolatry, were avowed and
 “ taught by legislators and philosophers, and
 “ they prevailed more easily because they were
 “ more conformable to the natural conceptions
 “ of the human mind, than the belief of one
 “ first intelligent cause, the sole Creator, Pre-
 “ server, and Governor of all things *.” And
 though he insinuates, that “ afterwards, when
 “ nations became civilized, and wise constitu-
 “ tions of government were formed, men could
 “ not be ignorant of this great principle,” yet
 he owns, that “ the vulgar among the *Greeks*
 “ and *Romans*, and all the learned nations of
 “ the East, acknowledged a multitude of divini-
 “ ties, to which they ascribed every excellency
 “ and every defect of their own nature †.”
 He endeavours indeed to apologize for them,
 by saying, that “ the worship of this multiplicity
 “ of Gods did not interfere with the Supreme
 “ Being in the minds of those that worshipped
 “ them ‡.” But in plain contradiction to this,

* Vol. III. p. 259, 260.


† Vol. IV. p. 199, 200.

‡ Vol. V. p. 305.

LETTER^{X.} “ he elsewhere saith, that “ they lost sight of
 “ him, and suffered imaginary beings to inter-
 “ cept the worship due to him alone *.” And
 speaking of the croud of imaginary divinities
 among the heathens, supercelestial and celestial
 Gods, whole Gods, and half Gods, &c. he says,
 that “ they intercepted the worship of the su-
 “ preme Being ; and that this monstrous as-
 “ semblage made the object of vulgar adora-
 “ tion †.” And indeed nothing can be more
 evident than it is from all the remaining monu-
 ments of Paganism, that the public worship
 prescribed and established by their laws was paid
 to a multiplicity of deities ; nor was there any
 injunction in any of their laws, that the su-
 preme God, and he only, was to be adored.
 The legislators, by his own acknowledgement,
 “ thought it dangerous to cure, and useful to
 “ confirm, the popular superstition ‡.”

He is pleased indeed to give a magnificent ac-
 count of the Pagan mysteries, as what were in-
 tended by the heathen legislators for reforming
 the manners and religion of the people. He as-
 serts as positively as if he knew it, that “ there
 “ are good grounds to be persuaded, that the
 “ whole system of polytheism was unravelled
 “ in the greater mysteries, or that no more of
 “ it was retained than was consistent with mo-
 “ notheism, with the belief of one supreme
 “ self-existent Being.” And yet he ridicules
 those who pretend to give a minute and cir-

* Vol. IV. p. 80. † *Ib.* p. 461. ‡ *Ib.* p. 51.

cumstantial account of those mysteries, as if LETTER X. they had assisted at the celebration of them.  " These rites, he says, were kept secret, under " the severest penalties, above two thousand " years. How then can we hope to have them " revealed to us now *?" He owns however, that " the vulgar Gods still kept their places " there, and the absurdities of polytheism were " retained, however mitigated : " And that " the lesser mysteries preserved, and the greater " tolerated the fictitious divinities which super- " stition and poetry had invented, such as " *Jupiter, Mercury, and Venus*, as well as the " rites and ceremonies instituted in honour of " them, which, he says, were practised even " by those who were consummated in the " greater mysteries." And that thus it was particularly in the *Eleusinian* mysteries, which were the most sacred of them all †. It gives one no very advantageous notion of the nature and design of those mysteries, that *Socrates* would not be initiated in them. And certain it is, that notwithstanding this boasted expedient, the people, particularly the *Athenians*, who were remarkably strict in the celebration of those mysteries, still grew more and more addicted to their superstitions and idolatries, which were never at a greater height than when Christianity appeared.

With regard to the philosophers, he tells us, " they knew as well as we know, that there is

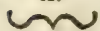
* Vol. IV. p. 58.

† *Ib.* p. 74.

" a first

LETTER “

X.



“ a first intelligent Cause of all things; and that
 “ the infinite wisdom and power of this Being
 “ made and preserves the universe, and that his
 “ providence governs it *.” But it cannot be
 denied, that some whole sects of them did not
 acknowledge the one supreme God, the Maker
 and Governor of the world: Others of them,
 as the Sceptics and Academics, represented these
 things as matters of doubtful disputation. And
 as to those of them who acknowledged the ex-
 istence of the *monad* or unity, he himself tells
 us, that “ they neglected to worship him, and
 “ conformed to the practice of idolatry, though
 “ not to the doctrines of polytheism †.” And
 such persons were certainly very unfit to instruct
 and reform mankind in this important article.
 And after giving a very lively description of the
 prevailing polytheism and idolatry, he adds,
 that “ thus the vulgar believed, and thus the
 “ priests encouraged, whilst the philosophers,
 “ overborne by the torrent of polytheism, suf-
 “ fered them thus to believe, in ages where
 “ true Theism was reputed Atheism ‡.” Some
 of the greatest philosophers were of opinion,
 that God was not to be named, or discoursed of
 among the vulgar, because they were not ca-
 pable of forming a just notion of him. *Plato*
 in his book of laws did not prescribe to the
 people the worship of the one Supreme God,
 because he looked upon him to be incompre-
 hensible: And that what he is, or how he is to

* Vol. V. p. 217.

† Vol. IV. p. 48.

‡ *Ib.* p. 200.

be worshipped, is not to be described or de-
 clared. But he appointed twelve solemn festi-
 vals to be observed, to the honour of the twelve
 principal Gods, and proposed the worship of
 the stars, whose divinity he recommended. See
 his eighth book of laws, and his *Epinomis*, or
 appendix to his book of laws.

LETTER
 X.


There was need therefore of an extraordi-
 nary divine interposition to awaken the atten-
 tion of mankind to this great and fundamental
 article of all religion. To divine revelation it
 was owing, that the belief and acknowlege-
 ment and adoration of the one true God, and
 of him only, was established among the *Jews*,
 whilst the learned and civilized nations all
 around them were immersed in the most stupid
 idolatry and polytheism. And this writer ac-
 knowleges, that “our Saviour found the world
 “ in a state of error concerning this first prin-
 “ ciple of natural religion : And that the spread-
 “ ing of Christianity has contributed to destroy
 “ polytheism and idolatry *.”

As the existence and unity of the one true
 God, so his attributes and perfections, and his
 governing providence, are of high importance
 to be clearly and certainly known. With re-
 gard to the divine attributes and perfections,
 Lord *Bolingbroke* observes, that “though The-
 “ ists will concur in ascribing all possible per-
 “ fections to the supreme Being, yet they will
 “ always differ when they descend into any de-

* Vol. IV. p. 243.

LETTER “tail, and pretend to be particular about them;
 X. “as they have always differed in their notions
 “of those perfections*.” A revelation from
 God therefore in which he declares his own di-
 vine attributes and perfections must be of great
 advantage to mankind. And it is what one
 should think every true Theist would wish for,
 that God would be graciously pleased to make
 a discovery of himself, and of his own glorious
 perfections, which may direct and assist men in
 forming just and worthy notions of them, espe-
 cially of what it most nearly concerneth us to
 know, his moral attributes.

And as to the knowlege and belief of his
 governing providence, in this also the heathens
 were greatly deficient. He observes, speaking of
 some of the philosophers who acknowledged the
monad, or first unity, that “they reduced him
 “in some sort to a non-entity, an abstract or
 “notional Being, and banished him almost en-
 “tirely out of the system of his works†.”

Tacitus, having represented it as uncertain,
 whether human affairs were governed by fate,
 immutable necessity, or by chance, observes,
 That the wisest of the antients were of different
 sentiments about it; and that many had this
 opinion deeply fixed in their minds, that nei-
 ther our beginning, nor our end, nor men at
 all, were minded by the Gods.

* Vol. V. p. 235.

† Vol. IV. p. 466.

Mihi hæc ac talia audienti in incerto judi- LETTER
X.
cium est, fatone res humanæ, et necessitate immu-
tabili, an forte volvantur; quippe sapientissi-
mos veterum, quique eorum sectam æmulantur,
diversos reperiēs, at multis insitam opinionem
non initia nostra, non finem, non denique homi-
nes diis curæ. TACIT. *Annal. lib. 6.*

Some, like our author, who pretended to own a general, denied a particular providence, which extends to the individuals of the human race, and under pretence of high thoughts of the divine majesty, were for secluding him from any concern with human actions or affairs. This then is another matter of great importance, in which an extraordinary revelation from God would be of signal use. For if he should condescend by any well-attested revelation to assure men of his concern even for the individuals of mankind, to declare his kind and gracious intentions towards them, and his cognizance of their actions, and the events that relate to them, this would greatly contribute to remove their doubts, and would lay the foundation for an ingenuous confidence, an intire resignation, a chearful hope, and steady dependence.

It appears, from these short hints, of how great advantage a well-attested revelation from God might be for instructing us in the certain knowlege of God, of his attributes, and his providence; things of the highest moment in

LETTER religion, and on which the duty and happiness
 X. of mankind in a great measure depend.

2dly, Another thing that it is proper to observe here is, that a divine revelation is very needful to teach men not only to know and acknowledge the one true God, his attributes, and providence, but to instruct them how to worship him in an acceptable manner. Dr. *Clarke* had urged, that “bare reason cannot discover in what manner, and with what kind of service God will be worshipped.” Lord *Bolingbroke* takes notice of this, and in answer to it observes, that “bare reason cannot discover how any external service that man can pay should be acceptable to the supreme and all-perfect Being.” He acknowledges, that an inward adoration, a gratitude to God for his benefits, and resignation to his providence, is necessary*; and that the law of nature teaches us “to worship God in spirit and in truth, that is, inwardly and sincerely †.” He seems to confine the worship required in the law of nature to inward worship, the devotion of the heart. But if it be necessary that men should worship the supreme Being inwardly, it seems highly proper that there should be some outward acts of religious homage, openly expressive of that inward adoration, reverence, and gratitude. Without some such external acts of worship, men cannot join in social acts of devotion, or in rendering to God public worship, without which scarce

* Vol. V. p. 208.

† *Ib.* p. 98.

any appearance of religion can be maintained in the world. It is the voice of nature and reason, in which all mankind have generally agreed, that there should be external as well as internal worship rendered to God, and that there should be sacred rites appointed for the better regulating and ordering that external worship. Accordingly he owns, that “ the
 “ best and wisest of the heathens approved the
 “ political institutions of an external service, as
 “ far as they helped to keep up a lively sense of
 “ these duties in the minds of men, and to
 “ promote the practice of them * :” And he had declared before, that “ there may be laws and
 “ institutions relating to such outward rites
 “ and observances, which may be proper and
 “ even necessary means to promote the observa-
 “ tion of those duties.” But he will not allow that “ any such laws can be divine ordinances ;
 “ they can only pass for human institutions † .” But I cannot see upon what foundation it can be pretended, that God cannot institute ordinances relating to the external rites of divine worship, when it is owned, that such ordinances may be instituted by men, and may be useful to keep up a lively sense of the great duties of religion in the minds of men, and to promote the observation and practice of them. It is undeniably manifest from the experience and observation of all ages, that there is nothing in which men have been more apt to err, than in

LETTER
X.
~~~~~

\* Vol. V. p. 208. † *Ib.* p. 93.

LETTER  
X. { what regards the external rites of religious worship, and that when left merely to human imagination and invention, these things have often hindered instead of promoting the main ends of all religion: This shews how needful it was that God should himself institute that external religious service, which is so necessary, and in which yet mankind has been so prone to fall into the errors and extravagances of superstition. Our author himself takes notice of “the numberless ridiculous and cruel rites of Paganism, which were held necessary to obtain the favour, and avert the anger, of Heaven \*.” And surely there could not be a more proper and effectual preservative against these absurd superstitions, than for God to institute the external rites of his own worship, and for men to keep close to his institutions. This was certainly one valuable end for which we may suppose it proper that God should extraordinarily interpose to reveal his will to mankind, *viz.* for directing them in the external worship he would have rendered to him, that it might be regulated in such a manner, as to be a fit means of promoting inward worship, and answering the main ends of religion.

3dly, Another thing of great importance to mankind to know, and in which a revelation from God is very needful, and of signal use, is moral duty taken in its just extent. Lord *Bolingbroke* himself represents it as taking in our duty towards

\* Vol. V. p. 203.



God and man, according to the different relations in which we stand to both \*. To which may be added, the duties and virtues which relate to self-government, and the conducting and regulating our own appetites and passions. Now the only way we have of being fully instructed and directed in the knowledge and practice of our duty, if all regard to extraordinary divine revelation be thrown out of the case, is either for every man to collect the whole of his duty for himself merely by the force of his own reason and observation, or to follow the instructions and directions of philosophers and moralists, or the institutions of civil laws.

As to the first, there are many passages in our author's writings, that represent the law of nature in its whole extent, as so clear and obvious to the meanest understanding, that man cannot be mistaken in it. He frequently talks as if every man was able without any instruction, by considering the works of God, and the constitution of the human system, to furnish out a scheme of natural religion for himself, including the main principles and duties of the law of nature. But this pretence is so contrary to matter of fact, and to the experience and observation of all ages, and has been so often exposed, that I need not take any farther pains besides the hints given in my former letter, to shew the absurdity of it, especially as I had occasion to consider it at large in the answer to *Tindal*.

\* Vol. V. p. 154, 543, 544.

LETTER

X.

for the knowlege of their duty, either to the instructions of their teachers and wise men, or to the institutions of civil laws.

As to the former, if by teachers be meant the heathen priests, as distinguished from the philosophers (though our author says, that in the earliest ages they were the same), I believe those of his sentiments will easily allow, that they were not very proper to instruct mankind in the right knowlege of religion, and in the true doctrine of morais. But with regard to the philosophers, though he represents them as *venders of false wares*, and frequently spends whole pages in invectives against them, yet when he has a mind to shew that there was no need of a divine revelation, he thinks fit to represent them as very proper and sufficient guides, and instructors to mankind. Dr. *Clarke*, in his evidences of natural and revealed religion, had offered several considerations to prove that they were not so. Lord *Bolingbroke* endeavours to take off the force of his observations, especially in the twenty-third, twenty-fifth, and twenty-sixth of his *Fragments and Essays*. And whereas that learned writer had asserted, that “ the heathen  
“ philosophers were never able to prove clearly  
“ and distinctly enough to persons of all capacities the obligations of virtue, and the will  
“ of God in matters of morality — And that  
“ they were not able to frame to themselves any  
“ complete, and regular, and consistent scheme

or

or system of things." In opposition to this, his LETTER  
 Lordship affirms, that "there is no one moral X.  
 " virtue, which has not been taught, explained,  
 " and proved, by the heathen philosophers, both  
 " occasionally and purposely — That they all  
 " agreed, that the practice of virtue was of ne-  
 " cessary and indispensable obligation, and that  
 " the happiness of mankind depended upon it,  
 " in general, and in particular — And that  
 " they all agreed also what was virtue, and what  
 " was vice \*." And he again insisteth upon it,  
 that "there is no one moral precept in the  
 " whole Gospel which was not taught by the  
 " philosophers — And that this is strongly and  
 " largely exemplified by *Huetius* in the third  
 " book of his *Alnetanae Quaestiones*." And he  
 blames Dr. *Clarke* for concealing it †.

There are two observations which I shall  
 make upon what his Lordship hath here offered.

The first is this; That if it were true, that there  
 is no moral precept enjoined in the Gospel, but  
 what may be found in the writings of some one  
 or other of the heathen philosophers, this would  
 not be sufficient to inforce those duties upon  
 mankind, or to convince them of their obliga-  
 tions to perform them. When so many of the  
 philosophers writ upon moral subjects, it may be  
 supposed, that one or other of them might, by  
 a happy conjecture, light upon some of the most  
 sublime precepts of the Gospel-morality. But  
 what was it to mankind what a particular philo-

\* Vol. V. p. 204, 205, † *Ib.* p. 218.

LETTER  
X.

osopher, or even sect of philosophers, maintained, or taught in their schools? They were not the public teachers of religion; and was it likely that their refined speculations, uninforced by any authority, and contradicted by others among themselves, should have any great influence upon mankind, and be regarded by them as divine laws, especially with regard to matters in which the gratification of their appetites and passions was concerned, and their own prevailing inclinations were to be restrained or governed? They might, after hearing the reasonings of the philosophers, think they were not obliged to govern themselves by their dictates, however plausible, and seemingly rational. Whereas a divine revelation clearly ascertaining and determining their duty in plain and express propositions, would carry far stronger conviction, and when received and believed would leave no room to doubt of their obligation. And he himself seems to acknowledge the usefulness of the Christian revelation *to enforce the practice of morality by a superior authority* \*.

My second reflection is this; That what this writer assumes as true is evidently false, *viz.* that the philosophers taught the whole of our duty in the same extent as it is taught in the Gospel. Moral duty, by his own account of it, comprehendeth the duty we owe to God as well as to our fellow-creatures. As to the social and civil duties, on which the peace and order of po-

\* Vol. V. p. 294.



litical societies immediately depends, these were generally acknowledged by the several sects of philosophers; though the regard that was paid by the people to those duties, was more the effect of civil laws, than of the doctrines and dictates of the philosophers. But as to that part of our duty which relates to God, with what face or consistency can it be pretended, that this was taught by the philosophers in the same extent that it is in the Gospel? Our author makes the adoration of the one true God, and of him only, to be a fundamental obligation of the law of nature, and idolatry to be forbidden in that law. And certain it is, that the most celebrated philosophers, instead of instructing the people aright in this important part of their duty, fell in themselves with the common superstition and idolatry, and directed men to conform in their religious worship to the rites and laws of their several countries; by which polytheism was established, and the public worship was directed to a multiplicity of deities.

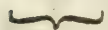
And as to that part of duty which relateth to the government of the appetites and passions, it is evident the philosophers were far from being agreed what was virtue, and what was vice. Some were for giving much greater indulgence than others to the fleshly sensual appetites and passions; and even the unnatural sin was not only permitted, but recommended, by some of them who were of great name.

He

LETTER  
X.

LETTER

X.



He affirms, that “ of a moral kind there were,  
 “ properly speaking, no disputes among philo-  
 “ sophers. They were disputes about insigni-  
 “ ficant speculations, and no more. For the  
 “ morality of *Zeno*, and of *Epicurus*, reduced  
 “ to practice, were the same \*.” As if it were  
 a trifling dispute, whether the world was formed  
 by a most wise, benign, and powerful Cause  
 and Author, or by a fortuitous jumble of atoms:  
 Whether the world and mankind are governed  
 by a most wise and righteous providence, or  
 whether there is no providence of God at all  
 with regard to human affairs. It is evident, that  
 submission to God, dependence upon his provi-  
 dence, gratitude for his benefits, and resigna-  
 tion to his will, concerning which some of the  
 Stoics said excellent things, could make no part  
 of the morality of *Epicurus*. Thus were the  
 philosophers divided in the most important points  
 of religion, and consequently in the duties re-  
 sulting from it.

But what the philosophers were not qualified  
 to do was perhaps effected by the legislators, and  
 the institutions of civil laws. This is what our  
 author seems to lay the principal stress upon. He  
 observes, that “ some few particular men may  
 “ discover, explain, and press upon others the  
 “ moral obligations that are incumbent upon  
 “ all, and our moral state will be little improved  
 “ by it. But that for this purpose governments

\* Vol. V. p. 219.

“ have

“ have been instituted, laws have been made, LETTER  
 “ customs established, and men have been de- X.  
 “ terred from immorality, by various punish-  
 “ ments which human justice inflicts \*.” Where  
 he supposes human governments and laws to be  
 the only effectual means for the security and im-  
 provement of virtue. But it is manifest, that,  
 as I had occasion to observe before, the civil  
 laws of any community are very imperfect mea-  
 sures of virtue, or moral obligation. A man  
 may obey those laws, and yet be far from being  
 truly virtuous, he may not be obnoxious to the  
 penalties of those laws, and yet be a very vici-  
 ous and bad man. Some of the most worthy  
 and excellent affections and dispositions are un-  
 rewarded by those laws; and some of the worst  
 affections unpunished. The heart, the proper  
 seat of virtue and vice, is not within the cog-  
 nizance of civil laws, or human governments.  
 And what farther shews, that civil laws and  
 customs are not to be depended upon for direc-  
 tion in matters of morality is, that it has often  
 happened, that those laws and customs have  
 been contrary to the rules of real religion and  
 virtue. This writer indeed has taken upon him  
 to assert, that “ whatever violations of the law  
 “ of nature may have been committed by parti-  
 “ cular men, yet none that were deemed to be  
 “ such, and perhaps few that might be called  
 “ ~~worthy~~ <sup>strictly</sup> such, have been enacted into laws,  
 “ or have grown up into established customs †.”

\* Vol. V. p. 480, 481. † *Ib.* p. 151.

LETTER <sup>X.</sup> And that “the tables of the natural law, which  
 “are hung up in the works of God, are obvious  
 “to the sight of all men; and therefore no  
 “political society ever formed a system of laws  
 “in direct and avowed contradiction to them\*.”  
 But though no legislators ever declared in plain  
 terms, that the laws they enacted were contrary  
 to the law of nature, which it were absurd to  
 suppose, yet that many laws have been enacted  
 which were really contrary to that law, is both  
 undeniably evident from many well known in-  
 stances of such laws, and is what he himself is  
 obliged to acknowledge. He observes, that “the  
 “law of nature has been blended with many  
 “absurd and contradictory laws in all ages and  
 “countries, as well as with customs, which, if  
 “they arose independent on laws, have ob-  
 “tained the force of laws†:” And that “er-  
 “rors about the law of nature, and contradi-  
 “ctions to it abound, and have always abound-  
 “ed, in the laws and customs of society‡.”

Laying all these things together, it is mani-  
 fest, that men stood in great need of a divine re-  
 velation, to give them a clear and certain di-  
 rection concerning moral duty taken in its just  
 extent. The laws of nature, according to our  
 author, are general, and men have been always  
 very prone to make wrong deductions from  
 them. And therefore if God should be pleased  
 in a way of extraordinary revelation to give a

\* Vol. V. p. 153.    † *Ib.* p. 100.    ‡ *Ib.* p. 153.—  
 See also *Ib.* p. 197, 201.



system of laws to mankind, plainly pointing out the particulars of their duty, and determining it by his own divine authority, whereby even the vulgar part of mankind might be certainly assured of their duty in the most important instances, and what it is that God requireth of them; this would both give them the best direction, and would, where really believed and received, have an influence in binding their moral obligations upon them, which could not be expected, either from the dictates of philosophers, or the force of human laws. And accordingly, some of the wisest lawgivers of antiquity, in order to give their laws greater authority on the minds of men, endeavoured to make them pass upon the people for divine. And this writer himself declares, that “nothing  
“ may seem in speculation so proper to enforce  
“ moral obligation, as a true revelation, or a  
“ revelation believed to be true\*.” Mr. *Locke* in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* hath fully considered this matter; where he hath shewn the insufficiency of human reason, unassisted by revelation, in its great and proper business of morality. His Lordship has taken some notice of this. But the account he is pleased to give of Mr. *Locke’s* argument is so poor and trifling, that though it be as fine a piece of reasoning as can be met with on this subject, it is hard to know it in his representation of it. This any man will be convinced of that compares it as it

LETTER  
X.  
~~~~~

* Vol. V. p. 268.

LETTER X. stands in Mr. *Locke's* works, Vol. II. p. 573, *et seq.*
 Edit. Fol. 1740. with what Lord *Bolingbroke*
 hath offered upon it, Vol. IV. p. 295, 296.

4thly, It is a point of great importance to mankind to be instructed to form right notions of happiness, or wherein their chief good, and the proper felicity of the human nature, doth consist. His Lordship hath taken notice of what Dr. *Clarke* had observed, that, according to *Varro*, “there were no less than two hundred and “fourscore different opinions about what was “the chief good, or final happiness of man.” He says, that “there were so many may be doubted; “but that they must have been extremely various, “is certain. The *summum bonum*, or supreme “good of man, as it was understood and taught “by the heathen philosophers, was a subject “wherein every man had a right to pronounce “for himself, and no man had a right to pronounce for another. These disputes were therefore very trifling *.” But certainly if there be any enquiry of the utmost importance to mankind, it is that about the chief good. For to be wrong in this will lead a man wrong in his whole course; since his chief good must be his principal governing end. His Lordship is for leaving every man to judge of this for himself, and that no man has a right to judge for another. And since he makes happiness to be what every man must pursue by the law and dictates of nature, and that the morality of actions, and the

* Vol. V. p. 206.

proper ground of their obligation “ consists in LETTER X. this, that they are the means of acquiring “ happiness agreeable to our nature *.” If men fix a wrong happiness to themselves it will put them upon improper measures, and give a wrong direction to their moral conduct. And certain it is, that there is nothing in which men are more apt to be mistaken, and to form wrong judgments, than this. This author makes a distinction between pleasure and happiness, and observes, that instinct and appetite leads to the former, and reason to the latter. But he owns, that most men are apt to confound these. And he himself defines happiness to be a *continued permanent series of agreeable sensations or pleasures* †. And must every man be left to himself, without any farther direction, to judge of his duty and happiness, from what he thinks will produce in him a series of the most agreeable sensations and pleasures; and that, abstracting (for so our author would have it), from all consideration of another life, and a future account? If the passions be brought into the consultation, and they will be apt to force themselves in, and claim being heard, the judgment that is formed is like to be very unequal and uncertain; especially considering the influence they have, by his own account, in bringing over reason to pronounce on their side, or at least to come to a kind of composition with them. It must needs therefore be a mighty advantage to

* Vol IV. p. 283, 284. † Vol. V. p. 378.

LETTER have this determined for us by a divine authority; and nothing could be more worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, than to grant an extraordinary revelation for instructing men in what relates to the true happiness and perfection of their nature, and directing them in the way that leads to it.

X.
5thly, Another thing which it highly concerneth men to be well informed of, relateth to the terms of their acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when they have offended him; and this is a very proper subject for a divine revelation. Dr. *Clarke* had urged this in his *Evidences of natural and revealed Religion* *. But his Lordship, who hath undertaken to answer him, thinks this to be of small consequence, and scarce worth enquiring about. He pronounces, that “neither reason nor experience will lead us to enquire, what propitiation God will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the supreme Being, and this worm man, is to be made †.” Indeed upon his scheme it would be to little purpose to make such an enquiry, since he would have us believe that God doth not concern himself at all about the individuals of the human race, nor taketh any notice of their actions, so as to be pleased or displeased with them, or to reward or punish them on the account of those actions. I shall not repeat what hath been al-

* *Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion*, p. 293.

† Vol. V. p. 209.

ready offered to shew that this scheme is con-^{LETTER}
 trary to reason, and if pursued to its genuine ^{X.}
 consequences would be subversive of all virtue
 and good order in the world. At present I
 shall only farther observe, that if men are rea-
 sonable creatures, moral agents, and if God
 hath given them a law, as this writer sometimes
 not only allows, but asserts, and which must
 be acknowledged, if the law of nature be God's
 law; then they must certainly be under indispen-
 sable obligations to obey that law; nor can it
 consistently be supposed, that the great Governor
 of the world is perfectly indifferent, whether
 his reasonable creatures obey his law or not. A
 transgression of that law, which is the will of
 God, must certainly have a monstrous malign-
 ity in it, as it is an offence committed by his
 reasonable creatures, and the subjects of his
 moral government, against the majesty and au-
 thority, as well as goodness, of the supreme
 universal Lord and Sovereign of the universe.
 And how can such creatures as we are pretend
 positively to pronounce what punishment sin de-
 serves, or how far it may seem fit to God in his
 governing wisdom and righteousness to punish
 his offending creatures, or upon what terms he
 will pardon their transgressions, and restore
 them to his grace and favour, or how far that
 pardon is to extend? These are things which
 manifestly depend upon what seemeth most fit
 to his infinite wisdom, and concerning which
 we could not presume to form a certain judg-
 VOL. II. Z ment,

LETTER
X.

ment, if he should not declare his will concerning it.

As to what our author adds, that “repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of the doctrines of natural religion; and he does not so much as suspect, that any farther revelation is necessary to establish it;” it will be easily owned, that repentance and amendment is necessary when we have sinned against God; and that this is a doctrine of natural religion: But that this alone is sufficient to avert the penalty we had incurred by disobedience, natural reason cannot assure us. It is certain, that to establish this rule in human governments would go a great way to dissolve all order and government. And who can undertake to affirm, that in the divine government it must be an established rule, that as often as ever sinners repent, they must not only be freed from the punishment they had incurred, but be received to the divine favour, and their imperfect obedience rewarded, as if they had not offended, without any farther expedient to secure and vindicate the authority of his laws? It is evident, that in the natural course of things, as ordered by divine providence, repentance and amendment doth not avert many of those evils which may be regarded as the punishments of men’s crimes. They often labour under evils brought upon them by those vices of which they have heartily repented, and feel the penal effects of their evil courses, even after they have forsaken them.

And

And since by this constitution the Author of nature hath declared, that repentance alone shall not free men in all cases from punishment, who can take upon him to determine, that our great offended sovereign, the most wise and righteous Lord and Governor of the world, may not judge something farther necessary to shew his displeasure against sin, and to vindicate the majesty of his government, and the authority of his laws? And accordingly the natural sense of mankind hath generally led them to be anxiously solicitous, when they were sensible of their having offended God, to use some means to avert the divine displeasure. Their fears have given occasion to much superstition, and many expedients have been devised, which have been generally of such a kind, as to shew how improper judges men are of those things, if left to themselves. A divine revelation would undoubtedly give the best and surest direction in matters of this nature, and the fullest satisfaction to the mind. It properly belongeth to God to determine upon what terms he will be propitiated to guilty creatures, how far his forgiveness shall extend, and what graces and favours he shall think fit to confer upon them.

The last thing I shall mention, as what shews the great need of divine revelation, relates to the rewards and punishments of a future state. That this is a doctrine of vast importance to mankind, for engaging them to virtue, and restraining their vices, appears from this writer's

LETTER ^{X.} OWN exprefs acknowledgements. Several passages were produced to this purpose in my eighth letter. At the same time he has endeavoured to shew, that we have no assurance of it by human reason, but that it rather leadeth us to believe the contrary. And yet he does not pretend absolutely to affirm, that it is evident to reason there is no such state at all. Since therefore it is of great importance to mankind to believe a state of future retributions, and yet we have not sufficient assurance of it by human unassisted reason, it must certainly be a proper subject of divine revelation. Some of the Deists indeed have in this case thought proper to take a different method. In order to avoid the argument brought from hence to shew the necessity or the advantage of an extraordinary revelation, they have pretended, that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, is so evident to the natural reason of mankind, and hath been so generally believed in all ages and nations, that there was no need of a revelation to assure men of it. But Lord *Bolingbroke* hath precluded himself from this way of arguing, since he hath taken pains to prove, that this doctrine is not founded in reason. And though he sometimes declares it to have been urged and recommended by the wisest men among the ancients, he represents it as if it was what they regarded rather as an useful doctrine than a true one, and as if they did not really believe it themselves, though they thought it necessary that

that the people should believe it. He affirms, LETTER
X.
that “ the greatest part of the philosophers did
“ their utmost to establish the belief of rewards
“ and punishments in a future life, that they
“ might allure to virtue, and deter from vice,
“ more effectually *.” Yet afterwards he tells
us, that “ the most zealous asserters of a Su-
“ preme Being, and warmest defenders of his
“ providence, and they who were the most per-
“ suaded of the necessity of religion to pre-
“ serve government, either rejected the doctrine
“ of a future state, or they admitted it by
“ halves, *i. e.* they did not admit future punish-
“ ments:” And that “ this doctrine was never
“ firmly enough established in the philosophical,
“ whatever it was in the vulgar creed.” Yet he
asserts, that “ it was not only problematical in
“ the opinions of Theistical philosophers, but
“ it seems in several instances to have little hold
“ on vulgar opinion.” As he endeavours to
shew by a remarkable quotation from *Cicero*,
Orat. pro A. Cluentio; which he seems well
pleased with, and refers to more than once †.

The truth is, it would be equally wrong to
affirm, that all the philosophers believed it, and
that none of them did so. It is wrong on the
one hand to pretend, as Lord *Bolingbroke* has
done, that there is no foundation for it in rea-
son; or on the other, that it is so clear and de-
monstrable from human reason, that there was
no need of a divine revelation farther to confirm

* Vol. V. p. 222.

† *Ib.* p. 354, 355, 487.

LETTER and enforce it. The arguments for a future
 X. state in general, especially those of a moral kind,
 are of great weight: But yet there are several
 things to be opposed to them, which diminish
 the evidence, and will minister ground of suspi-
 cion and doubt, if considered merely on the
 foot of natural reason. And as to the nature,
 greatness, and duration, of those future rewards
 and punishments, it is evident that unassisted
 reason can give us no information concerning
 it which can be depended upon. We stand in
 great need therefore of an extraordinary revela-
 tion to assure us of that invisible state. This
 plainly follows from what his Lordship hath ad-
 vanced. He represents "the rewards and pu-
 " nishments of a future state as the great bands
 " that attach men to revealed religion:" And in-
 troduces his plain man as saying, that "it would
 " be for the interest of these, and several other
 " doctrines, to let them rest on the authority of
 " revelation *." And he directly declares, that
 " this doctrine must stand on the bottom of re-
 " velation, or on none. On this bottom it
 " would do some good most certainly, and it
 " could do no hurt †."

The several considerations which have been
 offered may suffice to shew the need the world
 stood in of an extraordinary revelation. And
 that therefore it may be reasonably concluded
 from the wisdom and goodness of God, that man-

* Vol. III. p. 557 ——— See also Vol. V. p. 322, 353.

† *Ib.* p. 498.

kind have not been universally, and at all times, left without the assistance of such a revelation. It is particularly probable from the circumstances of men in the first ages of the world, that they were not left altogether destitute of means that seemed so necessary to furnish them with a right knowledge of God, and of their duty. This writer himself observes in a passage cited above, that “a consequence of the surprize, inexperience, and ignorance, of the first men must have been much doubt and uncertainty concerning the first Cause.” And that “to prove the unity of the first Cause required more observation, and deeper reflection, than the first men could make *.” And after having observed, that “the precepts of the law of nature are general, and that reason must be employed to make proper and necessary deductions from those precepts, and to apply them in every case that concerns our duty to God and man,” he adds, that “human reason being at best fallible, and having been little informed by experience in the early ages, a multitude of false deductions, and wrong applications, could not fail to be made †.” It is therefore highly probable from the goodness of God, and the necessities of mankind, that he would graciously interpose to make some discoveries of himself, and of his will, in the earliest ages, to the first parents and ancestors of the human race, to be by them communicated

* Vol. III. p. 259.

† Vol. V. p. 154.

LETTER
X.

to their offspring, for instructing them in the main important principles of all religion, and directing them in the principal articles of moral duty. And as this may be plainly gathered from the accounts given us in Scripture, so there are several facts in the history of mankind that almost necessarily lead us to such a supposition. To this may principally be ascribed the general belief of some of the main principles of religion, which obtained before men had made any considerable improvements in philosophy, or the art of reasoning; particularly relating to the creation of the world, the immortality of the soul, and a future state, which were generally received even among the most illiterate and barbarous nations, and were probably derived from a tradition transmitted from the first ages, and originally owing to divine revelation. And accordingly it has been almost universally believed among mankind, that divine revelations have been communicated; which belief may be probably ascribed to traditional accounts of such revelations, as well as to the natural sense men have generally had of their need of such assistances. There has been no such thing as mere natural religion, abstracting from all divine revelation, professed in any age, or in any nation of the world. Lord *Bolingbroke* in his inquiries this way is forced to have recourse to *China*, and to the fabulous ages of their history, answering pretty much to the golden age of the poets, when he supposes they were governed by mere natural

natural religion *. But of this he produceth LETTER X.
 no proofs. And if the ages there referred to re-
 late, as they probably do, to the early patri-
 archal times, the original revelation might have
 been preserved in some degree of purity, though
 in process of time it became greatly corrupted
 there, as well as in other nations.

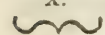
It adds a great weight to all that has been ob-
 served, that the greatest men of antiquity seem
 to have been sensible, that bare reason alone was
 not sufficient to enforce doctrines and laws with
 a proper force upon mankind without a divine
 authority and revelation. Our author observes,
 that "the most celebrated philosophers and law-
 " givers did enforce their doctrines and laws by
 " a divine authority, and call in an higher prin-
 " ciple to the assistance of philosophy and bare
 " reason." He instances in "*Zoroaster, Ho-*
 "*stanes, the Magi, Minos, Pythagoras,*
 "*Numa, &c.* and all those who founded or
 " formed religions and commonwealths; who
 " made these pretensions, and passed for persons
 " divinely inspired and commissioned †." This
 shews that they built upon a principle deeply laid
 in the human nature, concerning the need we
 stand in of a divine authority and revelation,
 and which was probably strengthened by some
 remains of antient traditions relating to such re-
 velations. But as those philosophers and law-
 givers he speaks of produced no proper and au-
 thentic credentials, it could not be expected to

* Vol. V. p. 228, 229.

† *Ib.* p. 227.

LETTER

X.



have a very lasting and extensive effect; and yet the very pretences to it gave their laws and institutions a force, which otherwise they would not have had. But as the several sects of philosophers in subsequent ages among the *Greeks* and *Romans* only stood on the foot of their own reasonings, and could not pretend to a divine authority, this very much hindered the effect of their instructions. And indeed the best and wisest among them confessed their sense of the want of a divine revelation, and hoped for something of that nature. This is what Dr. *Clarke* has shewn by express testimonies: Nor does Lord *Bolingbroke* deny it. He says, “it must be admitted, that *Plato* insinuates in many places the want, or the necessity of a divine revelation, to discover the external service God requires, and the expiation for sin, and to give stronger assurances of the rewards and punishments that await men in another world*.” But he thinks it absurd and trifling to bring the opinion of *Socrates*, *Plato*, and other philosophers, concerning their want of divine revelation, and their hopes that it would be supplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that after it had been long complained of, it was supplied†.” He attempts to shew that their want was not real, as if he knew better what they wanted than they themselves did, and were a more proper judge of the true state of their case than they were. He repeats what

* Vol. V. p. 214, 215.

† *Ib.* p. 216.

he had said before, that there is no moral pre-^{LETTER}
cept taught in the Gospel, which they did not ^{X.}
teach: And that “ the phenomena that disco-
“ vered to them the existence of God, discovered
“ the divine will in all the extent of moral obli-
“ gation*.” As if it were equally easy to dis-
cover the *whole extent of moral obligation*, as
to discover the existence of the Deity. He adds,
that “ they could not know a revealed religion,
“ nor any real want of it, before the revelation
“ was made.” That they could not be ac-
quainted with the revelation before it was given,
will be readily granted; but it doth not follow,
that they could not be sensible of their want of
it. He pronounces however, that “ their com-
“ plaints, and their expectations were founded
“ in proud curiosity, and vain presumption.” It
was proud, it seems, to be sensible of their igno-
rance, and need of farther instruction; it was pre-
sumption to hope or to desire any farther illumina-
tion in things concerning which they were in
doubt, and which it was of great importance to
them to know. He adds, that “ the knowlege
“ they had was such as the Author of nature had
“ thought sufficient, since he had given them
“ no more,” And concludes, that “ for Dr.
“ *Clarke* to deduce from the supposed reason-
“ ableness of their complaints, the necessity of
“ a farther revelation, is to weigh his own opi-
“ nion and theirs against providence †.” But
allowing the necessity of revelation, there is

* Vol. V. p. 217.

† *Id.* p. 220.

LETTER
X. no just pretence for arraigning the conduct of
 ~~~~~ divine providence. For however needful a revelation is supposed to be for giving men full assurance and information concerning things of high importance, yet those to whom that revelation never was made known, shall not be accountable for what they never had an opportunity of knowing. Besides, our author goes upon the supposition, that the world had been left all along without the assistance of divine revelation, and that the heathens had never had an opportunity of knowing more of religion than they actually did know. But this is a wrong supposition. God had been pleased to make revelations and discoveries of himself, and of his will, from the beginning; which, if they had been duly improved, and carefully transmitted, as the importance of them deserved, would have been of vast advantage. Great remains of this original religion continued for a long time among the nations. And these traditions, together with their own reason, duly improved, might have preserved the main principles of religion and morals among them. And if through the negligence and corruption of mankind this true primitive religion was in a great measure lost and confounded in polytheism and idolatry, no blame could be cast upon divine providence. Nor could the wisdom and righteousness of God have been justly arraigned, though no more had ever been done for the human race. But supposing, which was



really the case, that God was graciously pleased, LETTER  
X.  
at that time, and in that manner which seemed  
fittest to his infinite wisdom, to communicate a  
clearer and fuller discovery and revelation of his  
will, than had been ever yet given to mankind  
for recovering them from the ignorance, ido-  
latry, and corruption, into which they were  
generally fallen; this certainly ought to be ac-  
knowleged with great thankfulness, as a most  
signal instance of the divine goodness and  
love to mankind, and concern for human hap-  
piness.

There is one passage more which may deserve  
some notice. Having observed, that Bishop  
*Wilkins* seems to place the chief distinction of  
human nature not in reason in general, but in  
religion, the apprehension of a Deity, and the  
expectation of a future state, which no creature  
below man doth partake of; he remarks upon it,  
that “ they who suppose all men incapable to  
“ attain a full knowlege of natural religion and  
“ theology without revelation, take from us the  
“ very essence and form of man according to  
“ the Bishop, and deny that any of us have  
“ that degree of reason which is necessary to  
“ distinguish our species, and sufficient to lead  
“ us to the unity of the first intelligent Cause  
“ of all things \*.” But the Bishop by represent-  
ing man to be a religious creature, only in-  
tended to signify, that he is naturally capable of  
knowing, and being instructed in it, which the

\* Vol. IV. p. 71.

LETTER X. brutes are not : But it is not to be understood, as if all men had naturally an actual knowlege of religion, which is contrary to fact and experience ; or as if all men were capable of attaining to a full knowlege of it merely by the force of their own reason, without any instruction or assistance at all. Man's being formed a religious creature does not hinder the use and necessity of instruction. It is still supposed, that all proper helps and assistances are to be taken in. And notwithstanding his natural capacities, he would never attain to such a knowlege of religion without the assistance of divine revelation, as he may attain to by that assistance. These things are perfectly consistent : Man's being in his original design a religious creature, and his standing in need of divine revelation to instruct him in religion, and give him a fuller knowlege of it. Revelation supposes him a creature capable of religion, and applies to him as such.

It may not be improper to observe here, that this writer, who leaves no method unattempted, which he thinks may answer his design, seems sometimes to cry up the great efficacy of a true divine revelation, and the mighty effects it must have produced, if it had actually been made, with a view to shew that never was there any revelation really given to mankind. He says, that “ unexceptionable revelations, real miracles, and certain traditions, could never  
“ prove

“ prove ineffectual \* : ” That if the revelations LETTER  
X.  
 “ that have been pretended, had not been pre-  
 “ tended only, if the same divine wisdom that  
 “ shews both the existence and will of God in  
 “ his works, had prescribed any particular form  
 “ of worship to mankind, and had inspired the  
 “ particular application of his general laws, the  
 “ necessary consequence would have been, that  
 “ the system of religion and government would  
 “ have been uniform through the whole world,  
 “ as well as conformable to nature and reason,  
 “ and the state of mankind would have arrived  
 “ at human perfection † . ” He proceeds so far  
 as to declare, that in a supernatural dispensation,  
 the *divine omnipotence* should have *imposed it*  
*on all mankind*, so as necessarily to *engage their*  
*assent* ‡ . And that it *must have forced con-*  
*viction*, and *taken away even the possibility of*  
*doubt* || . Can any thing be more unreasonable?  
 As if revelation could be of no use at all, ex-  
 cept by an irresistible force it overpowered all  
 men’s understandings and wills. But surely, if  
 God gives men clear discoveries of his will and  
 their duty, this must be acknowledged to be a  
 glorious instance of his wisdom and goodness,  
 though he does not absolutely constrain them to  
 assent, which would be to take away their free-  
 agency, and to destroy the œconomy of his  
 providence. May we not here apply in the case  
 of revelation what he himself saith with regard

\* Vol. IV. p. 224.    † Vol. V. p. 201.    ‡ Vol. IV. 267.  
 || *Ib.* p. 261.

LETTER

X.

he gave us reason left us to our free-will, to make a proper or improper use of it ; so that we are “ obliged to our Creator, for a certain rule, and “ sufficient means of arriving at happiness, and “ have none to blame but ourselves when we “ fail of it. It is not reason, but perverse will, “ that makes men fall short of attainable happiness.—And we are self-condemned when “ we deviate from the rule \*.” This holds strongly with regard to revelation. God hath been graciously pleased to reveal doctrines and laws to mankind, of great use and advantage for instructing them in the knowledge of religion, and directing them in the way to happiness. But when he has done this, and confirmed that revelation with sufficient credentials, still he thinks fit, as the wise moral Governor, to leave them to their free-will, and the exercise of their own moral powers ; and thus deals with them as reasonable creatures, and moral agents. If they do not receive, and make a right use of this advantage, the divine wisdom and goodness is not to be blamed, but their own obstinacy and perverseness.

But though a revelation, if really given, cannot be supposed to come with such force as irresistibly to constrain men’s assent, and though it fail of producing all those effects, which might be justly expected, and which it is naturally fitted to produce, yet it may be of very

\* Vol. V. p. 288.



great use and benefit to mankind. This writer LETTER X. represents the general reformation of men as an impossible thing: He observes, that neither human nor divine laws have been able to reform the manners of men effectually. Yet he owns, that “this is so far from making natural or revealed religion, or any means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unnecessary, that it makes them all more necessary. — And that nothing should be neglected that tends to enforce moral obligation, and all the doctrines of natural religion. And that nothing may seem in speculation so proper to this purpose, as a true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true\*.” And he afterwards says, that “if the conflict between virtue and vice in the great commonwealth of mankind was not maintained by religious and civil institutions, the human state would be intolerable†.” Those therefore must be very ill employed, and can in no sense be regarded as the friends and benefactors of mankind, who take pains to destroy these institutions, to subvert the main principles of natural and revealed religion, and thereby to destroy all the influence it might have on the minds of men. If the reformation of mankind be so difficult, notwithstanding all the powers of reason, and all the force of the additional light, and powerful motives, which revelation furnishes, what could be expected, if all these were

\* Vol. V. p. 267, 268.

† *Ib.* p. 227.

LETTER laid aside, and men were taught to have no regard to them at all?

X.

I shall conclude with observing, that Lord *Bolingbroke's* scheme, contrary to his own intention, seems to furnish arguments to prove the great usefulness and necessity of divine revelation. He has endeavoured to shew, that we can have no certainty, if we judge by the phenomena, concerning the moral attributes of God, his justice and goodness: That no argument can be brought from reason in proof of a particular providence, though he does not pretend to say it is impossible: That the immortality of the soul, and a future state, though useful to be believed, are things which we have no ground from reason to believe, and which reason will neither affirm nor deny: That the laws of nature are general, and the particulars of moral duty derived from them, are very uncertain, and in which men have been always very apt to mistake, and make wrong conclusions. Now if it be of high importance, as it manifestly is, that men should be assured of the moral attributes of God; that they should believe a particular providence, extending to the individuals of the human race, and exercising an inspection over them, and their actions and affairs; that they should believe the immortality of the soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments; and that they should be rightly instructed in the particulars of moral duty; if all these be of unquestionable importance

portance to be believed and known by man-<sup>LETTER</sup>  
kind (and yet we can, according to him, have <sup>X.</sup>  
no assurance of them by mere natural reason),  
then there is great need of an extraordinary di-  
vine revelation to give us a proper certainty in  
these matters, and a well-attested revelation as-  
suring us of these things, and furnishing us with  
proper instructions concerning them, ought to  
be received with the highest thankfulness.





## L E T T E R   X I.

*Lord Bolingbroke's strange representation of the Jewish revelation. His attempts against the truth of the Mosaic history. The antiquity, impartiality, and great usefulness of that history skew'd. The pretence that Moses was not a contemporary author, and that his history is not confirmed by collateral testimony, and that there is no proof that the Pentateuch was written by Moses, examined. The Mosaic history and laws not forged in the time of the judges, nor in that of the kings, nor after the Babylonish captivity. The charge of inconsistencies in the Mosaic accounts consider'd. The grand objection against the Mosaic history drawn from the incredible nature of the facts themselves examined at large. The reason and propriety of erecting the Mosaic polity. No absurdity in supposing God to have selected the Jews as a peculiar people. The great and amazing difference between them and the heathen nations as to the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God, and him only. The good effects of the Jewish constitution, and the valuable ends which were answered by it. It is no just objection against the truth of the Scriptures that they come to us through the hands of the Jews.*

S I R,



S I R,

HAVING considered what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered with regard to divine revelation in general, I now proceed to examine the objections he hath advanced against the *Jewish* and Christian revelation. Of the latter he sometimes speaks with seeming respect and decency: But with regard to the former, he sets no bounds to invective and abuse. He here allows himself without reserve in all the licentiousness of reproach. Far from admitting it to be a true divine revelation, he every-where represents it as the very worst constitution, that ever pretended to a divine original, and as even worse than Atheism.

Besides occasional passages every-where interspersed in his writings, there are some parts of his works, where he sets himself purposely and at large to expose the *Mosaic* revelation. This is the principal design of the long letter in the third volume of his works, occasioned by one of Archbishop *Tillotson's* sermons: As also of the second section of his third Essay in the fourth volume, which is *on the rise and progress of Monotheism*: And of the fifteenth, twentieth, twenty-first, seventy-third, seventy-fifth of his Fragments and Essays in the fifth volume.

In considering Lord *Bolingbroke's* objections against the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, and especially against the books of *Moses*, I shall distinctly examine what he hath offered against

LETTER the truth of the Scripture history, and against  
 XI. the divine authority of the sacred writings. This  
 is the method he himself hath pointed out in the  
 above-mentioned letter occasioned by one of  
 Archbishop *Tillotson's* sermons.

I shall begin with considering his objections  
 against the truth of the history. But first it will  
 not be improper to make some general observa-  
 tions upon the Scripture history, and especially  
 that which is contained in the *Mosaic* writings.

And first, it deserves our veneration and re-  
 gard on the account of its great antiquity. We  
 have no accounts that can in any degree be de-  
 pended upon, or that have any pretence to be  
 received as authentic records, prior to the *Mo-  
 saic* history, or indeed till some ages after it  
 was written. But though it relateth to the most  
 antient times, it is observable that it doth not  
 run up the history to a fabulous and incredible  
 antiquity, as the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, and  
 some other nations did. *Moses's* account of the  
 time of the creation of the world, the general  
 deluge, &c. reduces the age of the world within  
 the rules of a moderate computation, perfectly  
 consistent with the best accounts we have of the  
 origin of nations, the founding of cities and  
 empires, the novelty of arts and sciences, and  
 of the most useful inventions of human life:  
 All which lead us to assign an age to the world  
 which comports very well with the *Mosaic* hi-  
 story, but is no way compatible with the extra-  
 vagant antiquities of other eastern nations.

Another

Another thing which should greatly recom-<sup>LETTER</sup>  
mend the Scripture history to our esteem is the <sup>XI.</sup> remarkable simplicity and impartiality of it. It contains a plain narration of facts, delivered in a simple unaffected style, without art or ornament. And never was there any history that discovered a more equal and unbiass'd regard to truth. Several things are there recorded, which, if the historian had not laid it down as a rule to himself, not only not to contradict the truth but not to conceal or disguise it, would not have been mentioned. Of this kind is what our author refers to concerning *Jacob's* obtaining the birth-right and blessing by a fraud \*. For though it is plain from the prophecy that was given forth before the birth of the children, that the blessing was originally designed for *Jacob* the younger in preference to *Esau* the elder, yet the method *Jacob* took, by the advice of his mother *Rebekka*, to engage his father *Isaac* to pronounce the blessing upon him, had an appearance of art and circumvention, which, considering the known jealousy and antipathy between the *Edomites* and the people of *Israel*, and the occasion it might give to the former to insult and reproach the latter, it might be expected an *Israelitish* historian would have endeavoured to conceal. To the same impartial regard to truth it is owing, that *Reuben's* incest, and that of *Judah* with his daughter-in-law *Tamar*, from which descended the principal fa-

\*| Vol. III. p. 304.

LETTER  
XI. families of the noble tribe of *Judah*, are recorded :  
As is also the cruel and perfidious art of *Simeon* and *Levi*, the latter *Moses's* own ancestor, and the curse pronounced upon them by *Jacob* on the account of it. This writer indeed, who seems determined at all hazards, and upon every supposition to find fault with the sacred historians, has endeavoured to turn even their impartiality to their disadvantage. Having mention'd *common sense* and *common honesty*, he says, that “ the *Jews*, or the penmen of their traditions, “ had so little of either, that they represent “ sometimes a patriarch like *Jacob*, and some- “ times a saint like *David*, by characters that “ belong to none but the worst of men \*.” This according to our author's manner is highly exaggerated. But I think nothing can be a stronger proof of the most unreasonable prejudice, than to produce that as an instance of the want of *common sense* and *common honesty* in those writers, which in any other writers in the world would be regarded as the highest proof of their honesty, their candour and impartiality; *viz.* their not taking pains to disguise or conceal the faults of the most eminent of their ancestors; especially when it appears, that this is not done from a principle of malignity, or to detract from their merits, since their good actions, and the worthy parts of their character are also impartially represented, but merely from a regard to truth, and from an unaffected simplicity, which every-where

\* Vol. V. p. 194.



appears in their writings in a manner scarce to be <sup>LETTER</sup> paralleled in any other historians, and which <sup>XI.</sup> derives a mighty credit to all their narrations. But what above all shews the impartiality of *Moses*, and of the other sacred historians of the Old Testament, is their relating without disguise, not only the faults of their great men, but the frequent revolts and infidelities of the *Israelites*, and the punishments which befel them on that account. Lord *Bolingbroke* has indeed discovered, what no man but himself would have been apt to suspect, that even this was intended to flatter their pride and vanity; “because though  
“they are represented as rebellious children,  
“yet still as favourite children—Notwithstand-  
“ing all their revolts, God’s predilection for  
“this chosen people still subsists.—And he re-  
“news his promises to them of future glory and  
“triumph,—a *Messiah*—a kingdom that should  
“destroy all others, and last eternally\*.”—As to the kingdom of the *Messiah*, which he here refers to as promised to the *Jews*, it was to be of a spiritual nature, and was not to be confined to the people of *Israel* alone, but to be of general benefit to mankind. And even the rejecting of that *Messiah* by the body of their nation, and the punishments and desolations to which this should expose them, were foretold. And it was certainly a most extraordinary expedient to flatter the vanity of a people, to represent them as having carried it most ungrate-

\* Vol. III. p. 284.

LETTER <sup>XI.</sup> fully towards God for all his benefits, and tho' not absolutely and finally rejected, yet as having frequently drawn upon themselves the most signal effects of the divine displeasure. If the view of the sacred historians had been to flatter the pride and presumption of that people, surely they might have represented them as the objects of the divine favour, without giving such an account of their conduct; from which their enemies have taken occasion bitterly to reproach them, as the most ungrateful and obstinate race of men that ever appeared upon earth. Nothing could have induced them to record facts which seemed to give such a disadvantageous idea of their nation, but an honest and impartial regard to truth, rarely to be found in other historians.

But that which especially distinguisheth *Moses*, and the other sacred historians, is the spirit of unaffected piety that every-where breathes in their writings. We may observe throughout a profound veneration for the Deity, a zeal for the glory of His great name, a desire of promoting His true fear and worship, and the practice of righteousness, and to engage men to a dutiful obedience to His holy and excellent laws. Their history was not written merely for political ends and views, or to gratify curiosity, but for nobler purposes. The *Mosaical* history opens with an account of the creation of the world, which by the author's own acknowledgement is an article of the highest moment in religion. It gives an account of the formation of man, of his primitive state, and his fall from that state, of the universal deluge,

the most remarkable event that ever happened to mankind, of the lives of some of the patriarchs, and of many most signal acts of providence, upon which depended the erection and establishment of a sacred polity, the proper design of which was to ingage men to the adoration of the one living and true God, the maker and governor of the world, and of him only, in opposition to all idolatry and polytheism. The recording these things was not only of immediate use to the people among whom they were first published, but hath had a great effect in all ages ever since, to promote a reverence of the Supreme Being among those who have received these sacred writings; and it tended also to prepare the way for the last and most perfect revelation of the divine will that was ever given to mankind. Nothing therefore can be more unjust than the censure he hath been pleased to pass on a great part of the *Mosaic* history, that it is *fit only to amuse children with*\*.

Let us now consider the objections he hath advanced against this history.

And first, he urges that *Moses* was not a contemporary author. This is not true with respect to a considerable part of the history recorded in the *Pentateuch*. Many of the things which are most objected against, especially the extraordinary facts done in *Egypt*, at the *Red Sea*, at the promulgation of the law at *Sinai*, and during the sojourning of the *Israelites* in the wilderness,

\* Vol. III. p. 304.

LETTER XI. were things to which *Moses* was not only contemporary, but of which he was himself an eye-witness. As to that part of the history which is contained in the book of *Genesis*, and which relateth to events which happened before the time of *Moses*, it cannot be justly objected against on that account ; except it be laid down as a rule, that no history is to be believed, which was written by an author who was not contemporary to all the facts which he relates. But this has never yet been allowed as a maxim in judging of the credit of an history ; and if admitted would discard some of the best histories now in the world. Nor does our author himself pretend to insist upon it as a general rule : But he wants to know “ where *Moses* got his “ materials, when he writ the book of *Genesis*.” A most unreasonable demand at this distance of time. As to the far greater part of that book, which relates to the lives of the patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, *Joseph*, and to the first settlement of the *Israelites* in *Egypt*, these are evidently things of which he may be supposed to have had full information. And with regard to the events which happened before the time of *Abraham*, the accounts given of them by *Moses* are generally very short ; consisting for the most part of little more than the genealogies of persons and families, interspersed with a few brief anecdotes, the memory of which was easily preserved. The most remarkable event during that period, and of which *Moses* gives the



the most particular account, was the universal deluge. And this must have been then very well known. His not giving into the extravagant antiquities of some of the eastern nations; and his not attempting to fill up that period with such fabulous romantic accounts as have been invented since his time, among Jews, Christians, and Mahometans, is a strong presumption in his favour; and the plainness, simplicity, and impartial love of truth, which, as hath been already observed, appears in his history, makes it reasonable to believe, that he had the accounts he gives from memorials which he knew might be depended upon. What ways they had of transmitting the memory of things in those ancient times we cannot at this distance distinctly explain, but that they had several ways of doing this we may be well assured. And it has been often observed by learned men, through how few stages the tradition might run from *Adam* to *Abraham*, and from him to *Moses*, considering the long lives of the first men\*. The only thing mentioned by this writer as what *Moses* could not have received by history or tradition, is the circumstantial account given by him of the creation of the world: With regard to which he observes, that "*Adam* himself could only have related to him some of the cir-

\* Mr. Hume makes the great length of men's lives, as recorded in the Mosaic history, to be an objection against it. *Essay on Miracles*, p. 206. But Lord Bolingbroke allows, that the lives of men in the first ages of the world were probably much longer than ours. Vol. III. p. 244.

LETTER

XI.



“ circumstances of the sixth day, but nothing that preceded this.” It will be easily allowed, that the account of this must have been originally owing to extraordinary revelation. And very worthy it was of the divine wisdom to grant such a revelation to the first parents and ancestors of the human race, since it was a matter of great importance to mankind to be well acquainted with it; and our author himself owns, that “ it leads men to acknowledge a Supreme Being by a proof levelled to the meanest understanding\*.” And it may be justly concluded, that the account of this was transmitted with great care from our first parents, to their descendants, and preserved among the most religious of them: Which might the better be done, if, as is very probable, the observation of the seventh day was appointed from the beginning to preserve the memorial of it. So that the preservation of this very important tradition may be accounted for even abstracting from *Moses’s* divine inspiration, which, if in any thing tradition had become imperfect, might easily enable him to supply the defects of it.

Another objection, on which his Lordship seems to lay a great stress, for invalidating the authority of the *Mosaic* history, is, that the principal facts are not confirmed by collateral testimony: And by collateral testimony he understands the testimony of those who had no common interest of country, religion or profession†.

\* Vol. III. p. 253. † *Id.* p. 281, 282.

But

But such collateral testimony as this is no way necessary to the authenticity of history. Many histories are very reasonably believed, which have no such collateral testimony to confirm them. Such testimony is frequently not to be had; nor could reasonably be expected with relation to many of the facts recorded by *Moses*. As to that part of the *Mosaic* history, which relateth to the times of greatest antiquity, little help can be expected from collateral testimony, since there is no history of those times now extant so antient as his own. And yet there are considerable traces of tradition which have been preserved among other nations, concerning some of the most remarkable events during that period, as hath been often shewn by learned men; especially with relation to that which is the most extraordinary of them all, the universal deluge. Nor can any thing be more false and contrary to known fact, than what this writer boldly affirms, that “the tradition of *Noah’s* deluge” is vouched by no other authority than that of “*Moses*; and that the memory of that catastrophe was known only to one people, and “preserved in one corner of the earth\*.” Not only has there been a general tradition in confirmation of it †; but there are many proofs of it all over the earth, many phenomena which plainly lead us to acknowledge that there has been

\* Vol. III. p. 224.  
relig. Christ. lib. I.

† See concerning this Grotius de verit.


LETTER such a deluge, and which cannot otherwise be  
 {<sup>XI.</sup> reasonably accounted for.

With respect to that part of the history which relateth to the laws given to the *Israelites*, and the extraordinary facts whereby the authority of those laws was established; they were not only things of which *Moses* had certain knowledge, and in which he could not be mistaken, but they were of a most public nature, and to which the whole nation were witnesses. The facts were of such a kind that the accounts of them could not possibly have been imposed by *Moses* at that time upon the people, if they had not been true, nor could they have been made to believe that they were done before their eyes, if they had not been done. And these facts having been all along from that time received by that people together with the laws in confirmation of which they were wrought, furnisheth a proof of authenticity to this part of the *Mosaic* history, which can scarce be paralleled in any other.

I do not see how the force of this can be avoided, supposing *Moses* to have been the author of the *Pentateuch*. But this is what Lord *Bolingbroke* thinks cannot be proved. He has made a kind of representation after his own way of what Mr. *Abbadie* has offered to this purpose; and adds, that it would be hard to find an example of greater trifling‡. But whosoever will take pains to examine the argument, not as he is pleased to represent it, but as it stands in

‡ Vol. III. p. 275, 276.



Mr. *Abbadie's* own book, will find how little LETTER  
XI. he has offered that can in any degree take off  the force of his reasoning. Indeed it is hard to know what greater proof can reasonably be desired of *Moses's* being the author of the *Pentateuch* than is given. The whole nation, among whom those books have been always received with great veneration, as containing the most authentic accounts of their history and their laws, have constantly attributed them to *Moses*. All those of foreign nations, that have mentioned their history or their laws, have always supposed *Moses* to have been the author of them. Never has it been denied till these latter ages, after so long a possession, upon some cavils and exceptions which are really trifling, and which have been sufficiently answered. And if all this will not be allowed to be a proof, it is impossible that any thing of this nature should ever be proved. It hath all the proof which the nature of the thing can admit of, and it would be unreasonable, by Lord *Bolingbroke's* own acknowledgement, to demand more. "Common sense, saith he, requires, that every thing proposed to the understanding, should be accompanied with such proof, as the nature of it can furnish. He who requires more is guilty of absurdity; he who requires less of rashness †."

There is then all the evidence, which can be desired in such a case, that the books containing the original history and laws given to the people

† Vol. III. p. 246.

LETTER <sup>XI.</sup> of *Israel*, were written by *Moses*, as the whole nation to whom the history belonged, and who were governed by those laws, and received them as the rule of their polity, have constantly affirmed. And of this they must be allowed to be competent witnesses. His Lordship indeed, with a view to shew how little the testimony of the *Jews* is to be depended upon, and how easily those laws might be imposed upon them, mentions “the little time that it took to establish  
 “ the divine authority of the *Alcoran* among the  
 “ *Arabs*, a people not more incapable to judge  
 “ of *Mahomet* and his book, than we may suppose the *Israelites* to have been to judge of  
 “ *Moses* and his book, if he left any, whether  
 “ of law alone, or of history and law both &.” But this observation is little to the purpose. The *Arabians* were sufficient vouchers, that the *Alcoran* was the book left them by *Mahomet*, containing the revelations he pretended to have received from heaven. In this they are to be credited. So are the *Jews*, that the books containing the original history and laws of their nation were written by *Moses*. As to the divine authority of those laws, this must be tried by other arguments. But however stupid we may suppose the *Arabians* to have been, it would not have been in the power of *Mahomet* to have made them believe, that they themselves had heard his laws distinctly delivered with the most amazing solemnity from heaven in the presence

of above six hundred thousand men, if there had been no such thing: Or that he wrought a series of stupendous miracles before their eyes, if he had not done so. And accordingly he was too wise to put the proof of his own divine mission, or of the authority of his laws upon facts of such a nature: Which would have been the most effectual way he could have taken to detect and expose his own imposture. But he pretended to have received communications and revelations from heaven, the truth of which depended upon his own credit. The same observation may be made concerning those celebrated lawgivers of antiquity; who pretended to have received their laws from the Gods, as *Minos*, *Numa*, and others. None of them ever put the proof of the divine authority of their laws upon public facts of the most miraculous and extraordinary nature, done in the presence of all the people, and for the truth of which they appealed to them. They pretended to directions from oracles, or to secret communications with the Deity, of which the people had no proof, and which they received solely upon their authority. But *Moses* put the proof of the divine authority of his laws upon sensible facts of the most public nature, and of which the whole body of the people, to whom these laws were given, were witnesses. Appeals were made to the people, at the time when these laws were delivered, concerning those facts as done in their sight, and which they themselves could not possibly deny. The accounts of those

LETTER  
XI. facts, as I have elsewhere shewn ||, are so inter-  
woven with the laws, that they cannot be separated. Some of the principal motives to engage the people to an observance of those laws are founded on those facts. Many of the laws were peculiarly designed to preserve the remembrance of the facts, and cannot be otherwise accounted for than by supposing the truth of those facts to which they relate. And this was the professed design of the institution of several of their sacred rites, which were appointed to be solemnly observed by the whole nation in every age from the beginning of their polity, *i. e.* from the time when they first received these laws, and their constitution was established. There were several public monuments which subsisted several ages, to perpetuate the memory of the most remarkable of those facts. The people were commanded, as by divine authority, frequently to consider those facts, and to take care to transmit them to their children. To which it may be added, that in all the remaining writings published at different times, and in different ages, among that nation, whether of an historical, moral, or devotional kind, there is a constant reference to those facts as of undoubted credit and authority. They are repeated on so many different occasions, so often and solemnly appealed to, that it appeareth with the utmost evidence which the thing is capable of, that these facts have been all along universally known and

¶ See View of the Deistical Writers, Vol. I.

acknow-



acknowledged, and the remembrance of them constantly kept up among that people. And upon the truth and authority of these facts, their peculiar constitution, whereby they were so remarkably distinguished from all other nations, was plainly founded; nor can it well be conceived, how it could have been established among them without those facts. It strengthens all this, when it is considered, that scarce ever was there any people, so well fitted by their constitution for preserving and transmitting the remembrance of their laws and facts, as the people of *Israel*. Their weekly sabbath, the observation of which was bound upon them in the strictest manner, and which was a constant memorial to them of their religion and law: Their sabbatical years, an institution of the most extraordinary nature, and which furnished a visible proof of the divine original and authority of that law, and in which it was ordered to be publicly read to the whole nation assembled together at their solemn festivals: The exact care that was taken to keep up the distinction of tribes, and the genealogies of the several families in their tribes, on which their legal right to their inheritances and possessions depended, and which they could trace to the time when the first division of the land was made, and their constitution established, with which the laws and facts were intimately connected: All these things laid them under peculiar obligations, and gave them peculiar advantages for preserving the remembrance of

LETTER

XI.

their law, and the facts done in attestation to it. Taking these considerations together the evidence for the laws and facts is as strong as can reasonably be desired for any facts done in past ages. And I am persuaded the evidence would never have been contested, if it had not been for the pretended incredibility of the facts themselves. But before I come to consider this, I shall take notice of some other exceptions made by Lord *Bolingbroke* to the credit of this history.

He mentions it as a suspicious circumstance, that “the priests in *Egypt* and *Judea* were intrusted with the public records,” and that this shews how little they are to be depended upon §. And he asks, “With what face can we suspect the authenticity of the *Egyptian* accounts by *Manetho* and others, which were compiled and preserved by *Egyptian* priests, when we receive the Old Testament on the faith of *Jewish* scribes, a most ignorant and lying race ||?” But it is a great mistake, or gross misrepresentation to pretend that the *Jewish* history and sacred writings, particularly those of *Moses*, were in the hands of the priests, or *Jewish* scribes alone. If like the *Egyptian* laws and records, they had been wrapt up in sacred characters and hieroglyphics which the priests only understood, and of which they alone were the authorised guardians and interpreters, and which were carefully disguised and concealed

§ Vol. III. p. 225, 226.

|| *Id.* p. 205.

from the people, there might be some ground LETTER  
XI. for this pretence. But on the contrary their history and laws were put into the common language: The people were commanded to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the laws that were given them, and with the history of those facts by which their law was established. It was urged upon them in the name of God himself to meditate upon them continually, to speak of them in their houses, and teach them diligently to their children. They were taught to believe that their interest in the favour of God, their public and private happiness depended upon it. No part of their history and laws was kept as a secret from the people: All was open and undisguised. And this was so different from the arts of impostors, or of designing politicians, as affords a strong presumption, that all was founded on truth and fact.

Our author is very willing to have it believed, that these writings were forged after the time of *Moses*. And the time he seems to fix upon as the likeliest for such a forgery is that of the judges. But there is not the least foundation for such a supposition. To suppose them to have been forged in the time of *Joshua*, or the elders that immediately succeeded him, is the same thing as to suppose them to have been forged in the days of *Moses* himself. It must then have been very well known, whether these were the laws that were given by *Moses*, and whether the facts there referred to as things of public no-

LETTER  
XI.

tority, and known to the whole nation, were really done or not. Since great numbers must have been able to contradict or detect them, if they had been false. And after the death of *Joshua*, and the elders that had lived in the time of *Moses* and seen those mighty acts, who could have had authority enough to have imposed those laws and facts upon the people? The deliverance out of *Egypt*, the sojourning of the *Israelites* in the wilderness, the laws and constitutions appointed by *Moses* in the name of God, the extraordinary facts said to have been wrought by him, their introduction into *Canaan*, and the manner of their settlement there, must have been comparatively fresh in their remembrance. It appears by *Jephthah's* answer to the king of the *Ammonites*, that the people of *Israel* were in his time very well acquainted with their own history, and with what had happened to them in the time of *Moses*, *Judges* xi. 12, &c. The same thing appears from the Song of *Deborah*, Ch. v. 4, 5. and from the answer of *Gideon*, Ch. vi. 13. And it cannot without great absurdity be supposed, that they could at that time have had a body of laws imposed upon them as the laws of *Moses*, and laws by which their nation had been governed ever since his time, tho' they had not known those laws before: Or, that they could have been made to believe that the facts referred to in those books were facts of which their whole nation had been witnesses, and which they themselves had received from their



their ancestors, and the memory of which had been constantly preserved among them, though they had never heard of these facts: Or, that such and such sacred rites and ordinances had been instituted, and constantly observed and solemnized in their nation in remembrance of those facts, if till then they had been utter strangers to the observance of these rites. And what renders this still more improbable is, that during that period there was for the most part no general governor who had authority over the whole, as the kings had afterwards. The several tribes seem to have been very much in a state of independency, and to have had the government within themselves. Few of their judges exercised an authority over all the tribes; nor were any of them priests till the time of *Eli*. In such a state of things, how was it possible to have imposed a new body of laws and history upon the whole nation, especially laws so different from the laws and customs of all other countries, and which enacted the severest penalties against the idolatries to which the neighbouring nations were so strongly addicted, and which the *Israelites* were so prone to imitate? If some of the tribes had received them, what likelihood is there that all would have done so, or would have regarded them as the laws of *Moses*, and as obligatory on the whole community, when they were so contrary to their own inclinations, and had never been imposed upon their nation before? Nothing less than such an authority

LETTER  
XI.

authority as that which *Moses* claimed in the name of God himself, and which was intorced by such illustrious divine attestations, could have prevailed with them to have submitted to those laws, or to have received those facts. To which it may be added, that it is manifest from the account given in the book of *Judges*, which is the only account of that time that we have to depend upon, that the general state of things during that period was this. The people frequently fell into a compliance with the idolatrous rites of the neighbouring countries. But when public calamities beset them, and which they regarded as punishments upon them for their transgressions of their law, they were made sensible of their guilt, and again returned to the observation of it, and to the adoration of the only true God as there prescribed; and they were encouraged by the great things God had formerly done for their nation, to apply to him for deliverance from their oppressors. So that every thing during that period shews, that the law of *Moses*, and the worship of God and of him alone, free from idolatry and polytheism, was then the established constitution, which they themselves regarded as of divine authority, notwithstanding they too often suffered themselves to be seduced into deviations from it.


After the era of the Judges followed that of the Kings. King *David* lived very early in that period. And it appeareth with the utmost evidence from the history and writings of that

great prince, that the law of *Moses* was then had in the highest veneration as of divine authority, and that the facts there recorded were universally believed and acknowledged. And though some of the succeeding Kings deviated from that law into the idolatries of the neighbouring nations, yet that law never lost its authority; and the observation of it was soon restored. The design of the prophets, of whom there was a succession during that period, was to keep the people close to the observance of that law: And the extraordinary facts by which the authority of it was established, were still had in remembrance. And on the credit of that law, and of those extraordinary facts, they still looked upon themselves to be God's peculiar people. This writer indeed takes upon him to assert, that "there were times when they had actually no body of law among them, particularly in the reign of *Josiah* when it had been long lost\*." But there is no ground to suppose, that ever there was a time under any of their Kings, when they had actually no body of law among them, or that the book of the law of *Moses* had been ever entirely lost. This cannot be justly concluded from the surprize expressed at *Hilkiah* the High Priest's finding the book of the law of the Lord in the temple, when they repaired it in *Josiah's* reign. For this is justly supposed to be either the original book of the law written by *Moses* himself, and ordered to be lodged in

LETTER  
XI.

X

\* Vol. III. p. 276.

LETTER XI.  a coffer at the side of the ark, and which was found when the ark was removed on occasion of the temple and holy of holies being repaired : Or at least an authentic copy of great antiquity and authority kept in the temple, and which might have been neglected, or thought to have been lost. But it would be absurd to imagine, that there was no copy of the law at all remaining in any private hands, or in the hands of any of the Priests or Prophets. And it may very reasonably be conceived, that upon finding an authentic book of the law of such venerable antiquity, the attention of the King and great men might be more thoroughly awakened to the things contained there, and they might make a much stronger impression upon them, than they had ever done before, even supposing they had read or heard the same things out of some other copy of the law of less authority, and which was not so much to be depended upon. There is not one word in the account that is given us of this matter of what our author mentions concerning the little time the reading of the book in the presence of the King took up ; from whence he concludes that it contained nothing but the law strictly so called, or the recapitulation of it in the book of *Deuteronomy*. Though if that copy had contained no more than the book of *Deuteronomy*, this is a collection not only of the principal laws given by *Moses*, but of the extraordinary and miraculous facts whereby the divine authority of the law was attested.



tested. As to what he insinuates, that all the sacred writings of the *Jews* were composed after the captivity, and that *Esdra*s and his successors compiled the written law \*, I shall not add any thing here to what I have elsewhere offered to demonstrate the palpable falshood and absurdity of such a supposition †, I shall only at present observe, that the preserving of the *Pentateuch* among the *Samaritans*, between whom, from the time of their first settling in that country, and the *Jews*, there was a fixed antipathy and opposition, affordeth a plain proof that the code of the *Mosaic* history and laws was not the invention or composition of *Esdra*s, but had been preserved among the *Israelites* of the ten tribes, in place of whom the *Samaritans* came. And the remarkable conformity there is between the *Samaritan* and *Jewish* code of the *Pentateuch* both in the laws and in the facts, gives a signal confirmation of the antiquity and integrity of the *Mosaic* history and laws: And how far the *Hebrew* code is to be depended upon.

But to proceed to Lord *Bolingbroke*'s farther objections. In order to destroy the credit of the *Mosaic* history he hath taken all occasions to charge it with inconsistencies and contradictions. Thus he tells us, that the *Mosaic* account is plainly inconsistent with itself, in supposing that the unity of God was the original tradition derived from *Adam*, and yet that it was lost, and

\* Vol. IV. p. 339. Vol. V. p. 229. † See *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History*, p. 51, et seq.

LETTER  
XI.

polytheism established in its stead in the days of *Serug*: Or at least of *Terah* and *Abraham*, four hundred years after the deluge. He thinks it absurd to suppose “ that the knowlege of the existence of that God who had destroyed and restored the world, just before, could be wholly lost in the memory of mankind, and his worship entirely forgot, whilst the eye-witnesses of the deluge were yet alive \*.” The whole force of this objection depends upon his own absurd way of stating the case, as if the knowlege of the existence of the one true God, were supposed to be then entirely lost and forgotten among mankind. True religion and the pure worship of God might have been considerably corrupted in that time, and idolatry might have made a great progress, though the knowlege of the true God was not entirely lost and forgotten among men: As our author himself, when it is for his purpose, thinks fit to own.

With the same view of proving inconsistencies on the *Mosaic* history, he observes, that “ it is repugnant to human nature to suppose, that the *Israelites* should, in the course of so few generations, become confirmed and hardened idolaters in *Egypt*, and should in so short a time not only forget the traditions of their fathers, and the God of *Abraham*, of *Isaac*, and of *Jacob*: But that they should have been as much wedded to idolatry, as the *Egyptians* themselves were †.” He himself furnisheth

\* Vol. IV. p. 19, 20, 217, 218. † *Ib.* p. 222, 223.

an answer to this, when he observes that “polytheism and idolatry have a close connection with the ideas and affections of rude and ignorant men.” And that “the vulgar embrace polytheism and idolatry very easily, even after the true doctrine of a divine unity has been taught and received \*.” It may well be conceived, that during their abode in *Egypt* the *Israelites* might have contracted a great fondness for the *Egyptian* customs. They might be allured by the power and splendor of the *Egyptians*, to entertain a good opinion of their religion: And the extreme misery and distress to which they were reduced by their servitude might lead many of them to question the promises made to *Abraham* and their ancestors, and make them more ready to deviate from the religion derived to them from their fathers; tho’ there is no reason to think they entirely forgot it, but mixed idolatrous rites with it. And even after their deliverance from *Egypt*, the idolatrous habits and customs many of them had so deeply imbibed, were not soon laid aside. It may easily be supposed, that they would endeavour to reconcile and unite them with the religion *Moses* taught them. And this seems particularly to have been the case with regard to the worship of the golden calf. He mentions it as an incredible thing that “they forgot the true God even when he conducted them through the desert: They revolted from him even whilst

\* Vol. IV. p. 21, 22.

LETTER  
XI.

“ the peals of thunder that proclaimed his descent on the mountain rattled in their ears, and whilst he dictated his laws to them†.”

He adds, that “ if the miracles recorded to have been wrought had been really wrought, nothing less than the greatest of all miracles could have made these real miracles ineffectual.” “ I know farther, says he, most intuitively that no creature of the same nature as I am of, and I presume the *Israelites* were human creatures, could resist the evidence of such revelations, such miracles, and such traditions, as are recorded in the bible—That they must have terrified the most audacious, and have convinced the most incredulous‡.”

Thus with a view to destroy the credit of the *Mosaic* history, he cries up the irresistible force of the revelations and miracles wrought among the *Israelites*. But perhaps he could not be so sure, as he pretends, what he himself might have done in those circumstances. There is scarce any answering for the extravagancies and inconsistencies which human nature may fall into. But he goes all along upon a wrong supposition, as he had done before, as if the *Israelites* had entirely forgotten God, or intended absolutely to abandon his worship. This was not their intention in the instance he seems to have had particularly in his view, their worshipping the golden calf. For it is evident, they did not design to renounce the one true God, the God of

† Vol. IV. p. 223.    ‡ *Id.* p. 225.



*Israel*, and to discard his worship. This appears from *Aaron's* proclaiming on that occasion a feast to the Lord, *Jehovah*; and from the people's declaring, *These be thy Gods, O Israel*; or as it is elsewhere rendered, *This is thy God, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, *Exod. xxxii. 4, 5.* compared with *Nehem. ix.*

LETTER  
XI.

18. Nothing can be plainer than that they intended by it to worship the God of *Israel*, who they knew had so lately brought them out of the land of *Egypt*; and that the worship they rendered to the calf was not designed to terminate there; but was done with a reference to the Lord, *Jehovah*, whom they were for worshipping by that symbol. They might therefore flatter themselves, that this was consistent with their acknowledging no other God but one, which had been so solemnly enjoined them: And that the prohibition of bowing down before any image was designed only to forbid the worshipping false Gods, not the true God by such a symbol. This indeed was an inexcusable contravention of the law which had been just promulgated with great solemnity, and which was intended to forbid their worshipping and bowing down before any image of the Deity under any pretence whatsoever. But it was what minds so strongly prepossessed with the notions and prejudices they had imbibed in *Egypt*, might be supposed capable of falling into. I would observe, by the way, that the recording this story affords a signal proof of the impartiality of the

LETTER  
 XI, } sacred historian. Nothing but the strictest regard to truth, could have prevailed with him to have inserted a thing which has been so often mentioned to the dishonour of that people, even by their own writers, and by others ever since. And it is very probable, that if the people in after-times durst have made any alteration in the original sacred records, they would have struck it out for the same reason for which *Josephus* has omitted it, as he has done some other things, which he thought would turn to the discredit of his nation.

Another attempt this writer makes against the credit of the *Mosaic* history, relates to the account given of their exode. He thinks it incredible that “ the *Israelites* should bear the oppressions of the *Egyptians*, when they were “ become so vastly numerous, and could bring “ six hundred thousand fighting men into the “ field, which was an army sufficient to have “ conquered *Egypt* ||. But what could be expected from an undisciplined and unarmed multitude, however numerous, against the force of a powerful kingdom? Especially when their spirits had been depressed by a long slavery, and a series of grievous oppressions; in which cases vast multitudes have been kept in subjection by a very few, of which there are many instances in history. In what follows he lets us know that he thinks the accounts given by Pagan authors of their exode not wholly fabulous, and that “ an

|| Vol. V. p. 147.

“epidemical infectious distemper in the lower LETTER  
*Egypt*, might make *Pharaoh* desirous to XI.  
drive the inhabitants of that part of his king-  
dom into the neighbouring desarts.—That  
many of the inhabitants of the lower *Egypt*  
were included with the *Israelites* in that trans-  
migration, and that a common distemper,  
rather than a common religion, united them  
in it.” And again, he mentions it as a rea-  
son of the *Israelites* staying forty years in the  
wilderness; that “it was a sufficient time to  
wear out the leprosy, with which, profane  
history assures us, they were infected †.” Thus  
he is for reviving a false and scandalous story,  
the absurdity of which has been so often ex-  
posed. The different accounts given by the Pa-  
gan authors, relating to that matter, will natu-  
rally lead every intelligent reader to conclude  
that the *Egyptians* endeavoured to conceal and  
disguise the truth. They could not deny the de-  
parture of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, and that  
it was in a manner and with circumstances very  
disagreeable to them; yet they did not think  
it consistent with the honour of their own  
nation, to relate the fact with all its circum-  
stances as it really happened. But of all the  
stories they trumped up on that occasion, that  
of the *Israelites* being expelled on the account  
of their being generally infected with the le-  
prosy, is the most foolish and ridiculous. It  
appears indeed by the laws and constitutions of

† Vol. V. p. 142, 144, 145.

LETTER  
XI.

~~~~~  
Moses, that there were leprosies, and other cutaneous distempers among the *Israelites*, as well as among the neighbouring nations in that part of the world, but it also appears with invincible evidence that the body of that people were not infected with those distempers, and that there were comparatively very few who were so; since the infected were ordered to be put out of the camp, and were treated in such a way as they could not have been treated, if a great part of the people had been leprous. But any story is caught at, however void of all appearance of truth, that tends to cast disgrace upon the *Jews*, and the holy Scriptures.

The only remaining objection against the *Mosaic* history, and which indeed seems to be what he layeth the principal stress upon is, that it is repugnant to the experience of mankind. That
 “ incredible anecdotes are not mentioned
 “ dom or occasionally in them, as in *Livy*, or
 “ other historians, but the whole history is
 “ founded on such, and consists of little else.”
 He compares those that speak of the *Pentateuch* as an authentic history to *Don Quixote*, and represents them as *not much less mad than he was*.
 “ When I sit down, says he, to read this history,
 “ I am ready to think myself transported into a
 “ sort of fairy-land, where every thing is done
 “ by magic and enchantment: Where a system
 “ of nature very different from ours prevails;
 “ and all I meet with is repugnant to my ex-
 “ perience, and to the clearest and most distinct
 “ ideas

“ ideas I have. Almost every event in it is in-
 “ credible in its causes or consequences, and I
 “ must accept or reject the whole ‡.” What his
 Lordship says amounts in other words to this;
 that this history gives an account of a series of
 miraculous facts and events, which were not ac-
 cording to the usual and ordinary course of
 things. This will be easily acknowledged. But
 it is denied, that this is a just or sufficient ob-
 jection against the truth or authenticity of the
 history, or a valid reason why it should be re-
 jected. On the contrary, if the facts there re-
 lated had been only of the ordinary kind, they
 would not have answered the end which the di-
 vine wisdom had in view. It was necessary as
 the case was circumstanced, that they should be
 miraculous, and therefore their being miracu-
 lous is not a proof of their being false. And
 considered in their causes and consequences they
 are so far from being incredible, that taking in
 their causes and consequences they claim our
 belief and veneration. The way of arguing
 made use of by our author, and others of the
 Deistical Writers in such cases deserves to be re-
 marked. If the fact advanced in proof of a di-
 vine revelation may possibly be accounted for
 in a natural way, then they are no miracles at all,
 and cannot give a sufficient attestation to the
 truth and authority of a supernatural revelation:
 And if they are of an extraordinary nature, and
 out of the common course of our experience,

‡ Vol. III. p. 280.

LETTER

XI.

and manifestly transcend all human power, then the very extraordinariness of the facts, and their being miraculous, though it is proper in such circumstances they should be so, is made a reason for rejecting them.

But that we may consider this matter more distinctly, it is to be observed, that it cannot be pretended that the facts recorded in the books of *Moses* are absolutely impossible, or beyond the power of God to effect. If any reason therefore can be assigned to shew, that it was proper they should be wrought, and that it was worthy of the divine wisdom to interpose in so extraordinary a way, those facts however miraculous they are supposed to be, become credible. And if to this it be added, that we have all the proofs that these facts were actually done, which the nature of the thing can admit of, or which could be reasonably desired supposing those things to have really happened, this is all that can be justly expected, and it would be unreasonable to insist on more.

The case that is here supposed is this. That when the nations had fallen from the worship and adoration of the one true God, and him only, and became involved in superstition, polytheism, and idolatry, which was still growing and spreading and in danger of becoming universal, it pleased God in his great wisdom and goodness, in order to put a check to the spreading idolatry, and to preserve his knowledge and worship among men, to interpose in an extraordinary way,

way, by establishing among a people chosen for ^{LETTER} that purpose a constitution of a peculiar kind, ^{XI.} the fundamental principle of which was the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God in opposition to all idolatry and polytheism. And in order to give weight to this constitution it was so ordered, that its divine authority was confirmed by a series of wonderful acts, which exhibited the most illustrious displays of his divine power and glory. And this constitution was designed farther to prepare the way for another dispensation, which was intended to be of a more general extent, and in which religion was in due season to be published to the world in its most perfect form.

This is a general view of the case, let us now examine it more distinctly.

And first, that at the time when the law of *Moses* and the *Israelitish* constitution was first established, idolatry and polytheism was generally spread through the nations, is a fact that can scarce be contested. This appears from all the remaining monuments of those times as far as we can carry our enquiries. Nor could Lord *Bolingbroke* deny it. On the contrary he acknowledges, as shall be more particularly observed afterwards, that so great and general was the attachment of the people to idolatry and polytheism, that the most celebrated legislators of antiquity, were every-where obliged to fall in with it. And he himself asserts, that “poly-

LETTER " with the ideas and affections of rude and ig-
 XI. " norant men, that one of them could not fail
 " to be their first religious principle, nor the
 " other their first religious practice*." This may
 be thought to be a carrying it too far, but it is
 certain, that if we judge from fact and expe-
 rience, there would have been little hope or ex-
 pectation of recovering mankind from the ido-
 latriy and corruption into which they were fallen,
 without some extraordinary expedient, above
 what either the legislators or philosophers were
 able to effect.

If therefore it pleased God to interpose in an
 extraordinary manner for this purpose, it ought
 to be acknowledged to have been a signal instance
 both of his wisdom and of his goodness. Our
 author himself represents it as a fundamental ar-
 ticle of the religion of nature, that " the Su-
 " preme Being is the true, and only true, ob-
 " ject of our adoration†." He calls this *that*
first and great principle of natural theology, and
the angular stone of true Theism. If ever there-
 fore it was worthy of God to interpose at all,
 or to concern himself with the affairs of men,
 here was a proper occasion for it, for maintain-
 ing and preserving that fundamental principle
 of all religion, which was become so greatly
 corrupted and perverted among men, and over-
 whelmed under an amazing load of superstitions
 and idolatries.

* Vol. IV. p. 21. † Vol. V. p. 98.

This accordingly was the excellent design of the *Mosaic* constitution, and of all the extraordinary attestations whereby the divine authority of it was established. It is undeniably manifest, that the chief aim of that whole dispensation, and the principal point to which all its laws were directed, was to establish the worship and adoration of the one true God, the maker and preserver of all things, the Supreme Lord and Governor of the world, and of him alone, and to forbid and suppress, as far as its influence reached, that idolatry and superstition, which the wise men of other nations humoured and encouraged, and thought it impossible to subdue. If we compare the *Mosaic* institutions with theirs, we shall find a vast difference between them. Lord *Bolingbroke*, speaking of the mighty degree of wealth and power to which the antient priests, who were also the antient philosophers and wise men, arrived in *Egypt*, *Ethiopia*, and the great eastern kingdoms, tells us, that “ the general
 “ scheme of their policy seems to have been this.
 “ They built their whole system of philosophy
 “ on the superstitious opinions and practices that
 “ had prevailed in days of the greatest ignorance.
 “ They had other expedients which they
 “ employed artfully and successfully. Most of
 “ their doctrines were wrapped up in the sacred
 “ veil of allegory. Most of them were propagated in the mysterious cypher of sacred dialects, of sacerdotal letters, and of hieroglyphical characters: And the useful distinction

“ of

LETTER
XI.

“ of an outward and inward doctrine was invented, one for the vulgar, and one for the initiated §.” He afterwards observes, that “ the worship of one God, and the simplicity of natural religion, would not serve their turn. “ Gods were multiplied, that devotions, and all the profitable rites and ceremonies that belong to them, might be so too. The invisible *Mithras*, without the visible, would have been of little value to the *Magi*||.” It ought therefore to give us a very advantageous notion of the divinity of the law of *Moses*, and the truth of his pretensions, that the method he took was entirely different: And that he was far from making use of those arts and expedients, which the antient priests and sages of the East thought necessary. He did not found his theology on false popular opinions: On the contrary, the fundamental principle of his system was subversive of that polytheism, which his Lordship represents as the natural belief of men in the first uncultivated ages, and to which a great part of mankind in every age have been undeniably very prone. No variety or multiplicity of Gods was allowed in his constitution; no false or idolatrous devotions in order to bring a greater revenue to the priests. He did not conceal his doctrines and laws in the cypher of sacred dialects, and sacerdotal letters, and hieroglyphical characters. His laws and doctrines were all designed for public universal use: And there was

§ Vol. IV. p. 42, 43, 44.

|| *Ib.* p. 49.

no such thing in his system as secret doctrines LETTER
XI.
to be communicated only to a few, and concealed from the vulgar. On the contrary, it was a maxim that lay at the foundation of that constitution, that all the people were to be instructed in the knowledge and worship of the one true God free from idolatry, and to be made acquainted with his laws and the duties there required. And though our author speaks of the allegories in the Old Testament, as if *allegory passed for a literal relation of facts* among them, it is certain that in the historical parts of the Bible, particularly in the *Mosaic* history, the facts are generally delivered in a plain, simple, narrative stile, obvious to the capacities of the people.

His Lordship speaks with high approbation of the celebrated legislators of antiquity, whom he represents as *the first*, and he *supposes the best missionaries that have been seen in the world**. He instances in *Mercury, Zoroaster, Zamolxis, Minos, Charondas, Numa*—And having told us, that they all, to give the greater sanction to their religious and civil institutions, pretended to communications with their Gods, or to revelations from them, he declares, that he believes it probable, that “ many of the reformers of mankind had discovered the existence of the one
“ Supreme Being ; but this knowledge might
“ seem to them not sufficiently adapted to the
“ character of the people with whom they had

* Vol. IV. p. 25.

LETTER

XI.

“ to do.”—He adds, that “ it was necessary
 “ in their opinion to suit their doctrine to the
 “ gross conceptions of the people, and to raise
 “ such affections and passions by human images,
 “ and by objects that made strong impressions
 “ on sense, as might be opposed with success
 “ to such as were raised by sensible images and
 “ objects too, and were destructive of order, and
 “ pernicious to society. They employed, for
 “ reforming the manners of the half-savage
 “ people they civilized, the dread of superior
 “ powers, maintained and cultivated by super-
 “ stition, and applied by policy †.” Thus, Lord
Bolingbroke, notwithstanding the zeal he pro-
 fesses for true theism, is pleased mightily to ad-
 mire and applaud the antient legislators, who, by
 his own account, countenanced and encouraged
 polytheism and idolatry; whilst he abuses and
 vilifies *Moses*, the main design of whose law
 was to forbid and suppress it. Indeed the me-
 thod he took was such as shewed that his law had
 an higher original than human policy. He esta-
 blished the worship of the one true God, the
 Creator and Governor of the universe, and of
 him only, as the foundation and central point
 of his whole system. Nor did he, in order to *suit*
his doctrine to the gross conceptions of the people,
 indulge them in that idolatry and polytheism to
 which the nations were so generally and strongly
 addicted. All worship of inferior deities was
 prohibited. And he expressly forbid the *Hebrews*

† Vol. IV. p. 26, 27.

to represent the pure essence of the Deity by any corporeal form, that he might accustom them to a more spiritual adoration of the Supreme Being: And if, as our author alleges, he adopted some of the *Egyptian* rites and customs in accommodation to the weakness and prejudices of the people*, though this is far from being so certain as he pretends, we may be sure they were only such as might be innocently used, and not such as had a tendency to lead the people into idolatry, or out of which idolatry arose: For all things of this kind he strongly and most expressly prohibited: And therefore commanded the people *not to do after the doings of the land of Egypt, or to walk after their ordinances*, Lev. xviii. 3. The other legislators pretended, as well as he, to communications with the divinity, yet whatever their private opinion might be, they durst not so much as attempt to take the people off from the superstition and idolatry they were so fond of. The reason was, they were sensible that their communication with the Deity was only pretended; and therefore they could not depend upon any extraordinary assistance to carry their designs into execution. But *Moses* not only pretended to have received his laws from God, but knew that it really was so, and was able to give the most convincing proofs of his divine mission. He was sure of a supernatural assistance, and this enabled him to accomplish what

* Vol. IV. p. 31, 34.

LETTER the ablest legislators of antiquity did not dare to
 XI. attempt. His Lordship observes, " that the
 " *Israelites* had the most singular establishment,
 " ecclesiastical and civil, that ever was formed †." And it must be acknowledged to have been in many respects very different from that which obtained in other nations. And it can hardly be conceived, how, as things were circumstanced, it could have been established among the *Israelites*, but in an extraordinary and miraculous way. The very nature of the constitution furnisheth a strong presumption of the truth of the miraculous facts by which the authority of it was attested and confirmed, and rendereth the whole account consistent and credible.

The chief objection which is urged against this, is drawn from the absurdity of supposing, that God should select a people to himself, among whom he would erect a peculiar constitution for preserving his knowledge and worship, apart from the rest of mankind. Or however, " if he had
 " thought fit, that the sacred deposit should
 " be trusted to a people chosen to preserve it
 " till the coming of the *Messiah*, no people was
 " less fit than the *Israelites* to be chosen for this
 " great trust on every account. They broke the
 " trust continually. The revelations made to
 " them, were, as Mr. *Locke* observes, shut up
 " in a little corner of the world, amongst a
 " people, by that very law which they received
 " with it, excluded from a commerce and com-

† Vol. V. p. 144.

“ munication with the rest of mankind. A LETTER
XI.
 “ people so little known, and contemned by
 “ those that knew them, were very unfit, and
 “ unable to propagate the doctrine of one God
 “ in the world.” He asks, “ Wherefore then
 “ was this deposit made to them? It was of no
 “ use to other nations before the coming of
 “ Christ, nor served to prepare them for the re-
 “ ception of the Gospel. And after his coming
 “ it was in this great respect of little use, if of
 “ any, to the *Jews* themselves *.”

There is scarce any thing that has been more the subject of ridicule, than the *Jews* being a chosen race, distinguished from all other nations of the earth. And yet that the *Jews* were remarkably distinguished above other nations, for the knowlege and worship of the one true God, is a matter of fact which cannot possibly be denied. Whosoever reads the monuments of heathen antiquity, of which there are very large remains extant, the constitution of their laws, and system of their polity, and the writings of their historians, poets, and philosophers, and compares them with the *Jewish*, will find an astonishing difference, that cannot but strike every man who considers it. It must be acknowledged, that many of the heathen nations, particularly those of *Greece* and *Rome*, were renowned for learning and politeness, peculiarly eminent for their knowlege in the liberal arts and sciences, and for the fineness of their taste in works of genius

* Vol.V. p. 242, 243.

and

LETTER and literature, which has rendered them the admiration of all succeeding ages. But in matters of religion we meet every-where with the most unquestionable proofs of the grossest idolatry and polytheism, in which not only were the vulgar universally involved, but it was countenanced and practised by the wisest and greatest men. That public worship, which was instituted by their most celebrated legislators, and a conformity to which was recommended by the philosophers, was directed to a multiplicity of deities. On the other hand, if we turn our views to the *Jews*, a people no way eminent for their knowledge in the arts and sciences, we shall find that monotheism, the first and great principle, as he calls it, of natural theology, the acknowledgement and worship of the one true God, the Maker and Lord of the universe, and of him only, was the fundamental principle of their constitution, and of their state, all worship of inferior deities, and of the true God by images was most expressly prohibited in their laws. If we examine their writings, we may observe that they every-where discover the profoundest veneration for the Deity; they abound with the sublimest sentiments of his divine Majesty, his incomparable perfections, his supreme dominion, and all-disposing providence, and every-where express an utter detestation of all idolatry and polytheism. Nor is this the spirit of their moral and devotional writings only, but of their historical too; the principal design of which is to promote the great ends of religion,

gion, by representing the happy state of their nation, when they adhered to the worship of God, and persisted in obedience to his laws, and the calamities and miseries that befel them as a punishment for their defections and revolts. Their very poetry was vastly different from that of the heathen nations; not designed, like theirs, to celebrate the praises, the amours, the exploits of their fictitious deities, but fitted to inspire the noblest ideas of God, and containing the most elevated descriptions of his glory and perfection.

It is natural therefore to inquire, whence comes this amazing difference between the *Jews*, and the most learned and civilized heathen nations in the knowlege and worship of the deity. It is his Lordship's own observation, that "without
" revelation the belief of the unity of God, could
" not be the faith of any one people, till ob-
" servation and meditation, till a full and vi-
" gorous exercise of reason made it such*." And again, he tells us, that "the rational, the or-
" thodox belief, was not established, nor could
" be so, till the manhood of philosophy||." How comes it then that the public acknowlege-
ment and adoration of the one true God free from polytheism and idolatry was the established religion of the *Jews* only? Were they the only people who had reason in a full and vigorous exercise, and among whom philosophy was arrived at its manhood? If so, it is wrong to re-

* Vol. IV. p. 20.

|| *Ib.* p. 22, 23.

LETTER
XI.

present them as the Deistical Writers have frequently done, as the most stupid of the human race, a people *ignorant and barbarous*, as he and Mr. *Hume* calls them. Nor had he a right to laugh at Mr. *Abbadie*, who, he says, has represented them as *a nation of sages and philosophers* ‡. It will be readily allowed, that the *Jews* were not of themselves more wise and knowing, or better philosophers than other nations, or that they made deeper observations and reflections, and that they were even inferior to some of them in several branches of science. We have all the reason therefore in the world to conclude that if left to themselves, they would have been involved in the common polytheism and idolatry, as well as all the nations round them: And that it was owing only to their having had the advantage of an extraordinary revelation, and to their peculiar constitution, which was of divine original, and which had been confirmed by the most illustrious attestations, that they became so remarkably distinguished.

Lord *Bolingbroke* was very sensible how unfavourable this is to his cause, and therefore finds great fault with Mr. *Locke* for assuming, that the belief and worship of the one true God was the national religion of the *Israelites* alone, and that it was their particular privilege and advantage to know the true God, and his true worship, whilst the heathen nations were in a state of darkness and ignorance. To take off the force of this seems to be the principal design of

his third Essay, which is of *the rise and progress* LETTER XI.
of monotheism †. But what he offers to this purpose is extremely trifling. He is forced quite to alter the true state of the question, and supposes Mr. *Locke* and the Christian divines to assert, that there was not any knowlege or worship of the true God in the world at all before the erection of the *Israelitish* polity, and that all the nations, except the *Israelites*, had been ignorant of the true God from the beginning. And then he argues, that “this implies that the *Israelites* were a nation from the beginning;” and gravely asks, “Were they so, if we reckon from *Adam*, or even from *Noah*, or even from the vocation of their father *Abraham* *.” Thus he frames a ridiculous hypothesis for his adversaries, and then endeavours to expose it: Whereas they maintain what he thinks fit to deny, that the knowlege and worship of the true God was the original primitive religion of mankind, derived from the first parents and ancestors of the human race: But that before the time of *Moses* the nations were generally lapsed into polytheism and idolatry, which appears from his own acknowledgement, to have been the case.

He affirms indeed, that “it is plain that the knowlege of the one true God would have been preserved in the world, if no such people as the *Jews* had ever been. And nothing can be more impertinent than the hypothesis, that

† Vol. IV. p. 187, *et seq.* * *Ib.* p. 233.

LETTER^{XI.} “ this people, the least fit perhaps on many ac-
 counts, that could have been chosen, was
 chosen to preserve this knowlege. It was ac-
 quired, and it was preserved independently of
 them among the heathen philosophers. And
 it might have become, and probably did be-
 come the national belief in countries un-
 known to us, or even in those who were
 fallen back into ignorance, before they ap-
 pear in the traditions we have*.” What an
 extraordinary way of talking is this! He argues
 from the supposed national belief of countries
 unknown to us, and of which he confesses we
 have no traditions extant, to shew that religion
 would have been preserved in the world, if no
 such people as the *Jews* had ever been. As to
 the heathen philosophers, among whom, he
 says, the knowlege of the true God was pre-
 served, it is certain, and he himself frequently
 owns it, that whatever knowlege some of them
 had this way, it was of little use to hinder the
 polytheism and idolatry of the people, and that
 instead of reclaiming them from it, they fell in
 with it themselves, and even encouraged and
 advised the people to a compliance with the pub-
 lic laws and customs, by which polytheism was
 established.

Thus it appears that after all the outcry and
 ridicule against the *Jews* as the unfittest people
 in the world to have the sacred depostite of the
 acknowledgement and adoration of the one true

* Vol. IV. p. 79.

God committed to them, they were the only LETTER
XI. people concerning whom we have any proofs that they made a public national acknowledgement of this great principle, and among whom it was established as the fundamental law of their state. It is urged indeed, that their constitution had little effect upon them. That “their history is little else than a relation of their
“rebelling and repenting; and these rebellions,
“not those of particular men, surprised and
“hurried into disobedience by their passions,
“but national deliberate violations of the law,
“in defiance of the Supreme Being*.” But if we compare the history of the *Jews* with that of the heathen nations, we shall find a very remarkable difference between them. Notwithstanding all the faults and defections of the former, and though they too often fell into idolatries and vicious practices in a conformity to the customs of the neighbouring countries, they again recovered from them, and returned to the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God and him only, and often continued for a considerable number of years together in the profession and practice of the true religion free from idolatry; of which there are many proofs in all the ages of their nation from the days of *Moses* to the *Babylonish* captivity; during the time of their Judges, Kings, &c. as every one knows that is at all acquainted with their history. This was owing to the revelation they enjoyed:

LETTER

XI.

They still had recourse to their law, and by that reformed themselves, and returned to the pure worship of God according to that law; to which after the *Babylonish* captivity, in which they had suffered so much for their defections and revolts, they adhered more closely than ever. But among the heathen nations, even those of them that were most learned and civilized, such as the *Grecians* and *Romans*, all was one continued course of polytheism, and the most absurd idolatries. Nor can we name any period of their history, in which they laid aside the public polytheism, and returned to the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God, and of him only. It must be said therefore that the *Jewish* history doth indeed furnish plain proofs of what the author observes the proneness of mankind in all ages to polytheism and idolatry, but it shews at the same time, that by virtue of their peculiar constitution, the worship of God was maintained among them in a manner in which it was not in any other nation. And this affordeth a signal proof of the benefit of revelation, and how far superior it is to the efforts of the wisest lawgivers and philosophers.

It appears then that the *Mosaic* constitution did answer very valuable ends. By this there was a people preserved, among whom the knowledge and adoration of the one living and true God was maintained in a world over-run with superstition and idolatry; and to whom an admirable system of laws was given. And

not-

notwithstanding all that is said about the people of *Israel*, being shut up in a corner of the earth; they were placed in an advantageous situation, in the center of the then known world, between *Egypt* and *Arabia* on the one hand, and *Syria*, *Chaldea*, and *Assyria* on the other, among whom the first great empires were erected, and from whence knowlege and learning seems to have been derived to the western parts of the world. And they were also in the neighbourhood of *Sidon* and *Tyre*, the greatest emporiums in the world, from whence ships went to all parts, even the most distant countries. Their peculiar constitution, whereby they were so remarkably distinguished from other nations, together with the extraordinary things God had done for them, had a natural tendency to put the neighbouring people upon enquiring into the design of all this, which would be apt to lead them to the adoration of the one true God, and into the knowlege of the true religion in its most necessary and important principles, and to discover to them the folly and unreasonableness of their own superstition and idolatry. That this was really part of the design which the divine wisdom had in view in this constitution, and that therefore it was intended to be of use to other nations besides the people of *Israel*, plainly appears from many passages of Scripture †. They were indeed kept distinct from

† See particularly Exod. vii. 15. ix. 16. xiv. 4. Numb. xiv. 13, 24, 21. Deut. iv. 6. 1 Kings viii. 41, 42, 43. Ps. xxvi. 3.


LETTER ^{XI.} other people, and it was necessary for wise ends they should be so : But they were always ready to receive among them those of other nations who worshiped the one true God, though they did not conform to the peculiar rites of their polity. And in the most flourishing times of their state, particularly in the reigns of *David* and *Solomon*, they had an extensive dominion and correspondence. And afterwards they had frequent intercourse with *Egypt*, *Syria*, *Assyria*, *Chaldea*, and *Persia*. And if we consider what is related concerning the Queen of *Sheba*, and *Hiram* King of *Tyre*, as well as the memorable decrees of *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*, *Darius the Mede*, *Cyrus*, *Darius Hystaspes*, and *Artaxerxes*, Kings of *Persia*, the greatest monarchs then upon earth, and who published to the world the regard and veneration they had for the Lord *Jehovah*, the God whom the *Jews* worshiped ; it is very probable that the fame of their laws, and the remarkable interpositions of providence on their behalf, spread far and wide among the nations, and contributed in more instances than is commonly imagined, to keep up some knowledge of the true God, the Maker and Lord of the universe, and to give some check to the prevailing idolatry, and to preserve the antient patriarchal religion from being utterly extinguished. To which it may be added, that in the latter times of their state, vast numbers of the *Jews* were dispersed through *Egypt*, *Babylonia*, *Persia*, and other

other parts of the east ; and afterwards through the *Lesser Asia*, and the several parts of the *Roman* empire : And they every-where turned many of the *Gentiles* from the common idolatry and polytheism ; which the philosophers were scarce able to effect in a single instance. It appears then that the setting apart that people in so extraordinary a manner, the revelation that was given them, and the marvellous acts of divine providence towards them, were fitted for having an extensive effect for the advantage of other nations as well as their own, and actually had that effect in multitudes of instances. By this constitution there was a light set up, shining in a dark place, to which other nations might have recourse. And if instead of making use of it, as they ought to have done, they generally neglected it, and even hated and despised the *Jews* for having a religion so opposite to their own, and condemning their superstitions and idolatries ; the fault is to be charged upon themselves, who neglected those means and helps, as they had done before the discoveries made to them by antient tradition, and which had been originally derived from revelation, and by the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence. Besides this, what farther shews the great propriety and usefulness of this peculiar constitution, and the revelation given to the people of *Israel* is, that it had a great tendency to prepare the world for receiving that more perfect dispensation which was to succeed it,

LETTER and which was to be of a more general extent,
 XI. and to be more universally diffused. The first
 harvest of converts to Christianity was among
 the *Jews* and their proselytes, of whom great
 numbers were brought over to the Christian
 faith. The *Jewish* Scriptures were generally
 dispersed, and had spread the knowledge of God,
 and had raised an expectation of a glorious and
 divine person, by whom a new and most excel-
 lent dispensation was to be introduced, and the
Gentiles were to be brought over, more gene-
 rally than had hitherto been done, from their
 superstitions and idolatries, from their abomi-
 nable vices and corruptions, to the pure worship
 of God, and the knowledge and practice of true
 religion. This glorious person was foretold and
 described in the *Jewish* prophecies by many re-
 markable characters, which being accomplished
 in our Saviour gave a most illustrious attestation
 to His divine mission. And these prophecies
 were kept more clear and distinct by being in the
 hands of a peculiar people as the depositaries of
 them: Whereas if they had been, like other tra-
 ditions, left merely at large among the nations,
 they would probably in process of time have
 been corrupted and lost, and the testimony ari-
 sing from them must have fallen.

Taking all these considerations together, it
 appears that the peculiar *Jewish* œconomy an-
 swered many very valuable and important ends:
 And that therefore it was no way unworthy of
 the divine wisdom to interpose in an extraor-
 dinary

dinary manner to give a divine attestation to it. LETTER
XI.
 And that the miraculous facts, if really done, were every way sufficient for this purpose, our author himself does not deny. On the contrary, he looks upon them to have been so strong and convincing, that it would have been impossible to resist them; and he thinks they must have been sufficient, if they had been really done, to have brought over all mankind to the belief and acknowledgement of the one true God, not only in that age, but in all succeeding ages. His manner of expressing himself is remarkable. He says, that “the reviving and continuing the
 “ primitive faith and worship by such a series of
 “ revelations and miracles among one people,
 “ would have made any revival of them unnecessary among any other; because they
 “ would have been more than sufficient to
 “ continue them uncorrupted over the whole
 “ world; not only till the vocation of *Abraham*, four hundred years after the deluge,
 “ not only till the coming of the *Messiah*, two
 “ thousand years after that, but even to this
 “ hour, and to the consummation of all
 “ things ||.” Not to insist upon the great absurdity of his supposing, that the miracles wrought among the *Israelites* so long after the vocation of *Abraham*, would have been sufficient to have kept the true religion uncorrupted till the vocation of *Abraham*; a blunder which could only have been owing to the most inex-

LETTER XI.  cusable negligence in writing: I think it follows from his own concessions, that the miracles and other extraordinary methods made use of for the establishment of the *Mosaic* œconomy, were of such a nature as to be well fitted to the end for which they were designed, the revival and establishment of the worship of the one true God in opposition to idolatry and polytheism. And though it be wrong to suppose as he most absurdly does, that they must have established it among all mankind, and have prevented all deviations from it in all ages and nations; yet it will be acknowledged, that those facts were of such a kind as to have been sufficient to convince all those to whom they were known, that the laws, in attestation to which they were wrought, were of a divine original. Accordingly the people of *Israel*, notwithstanding their proneness to idolatry, and their obstinate prejudices, were brought to submit to those laws as of divine authority, and to receive them as the rule of their polity. And though they fell off on several occasions to a compliance with the idolatries of the neighbouring nations, which they mixed with their own rites, yet the remembrance and belief of those facts, which always continued among them, had mighty effects in every age of their state, to bring them back to the true worship of God, and to an obedience to their laws. And they have had a great effect ever since, where-ever they have been believed, to fill men with a holy fear of God, and with the most

most adoring thoughts of his divine unequal'd majesty and glory. This effect they continue to have among Christians, and are like to have to the end of the world.

LETTER
XI.

It is no just objection against the truth of the facts, that they come to us through the hands of the *Jews*. For what other testimony can be reasonably desired, or can the nature of the thing admit of, than the concurrent testimony of that people, to whom the laws were given, and among whom the facts were done? A testimony continued throughout all the ages of their nation, and appearing in all their records and monuments. The facts were done among themselves; and therefore in the nature of things could only be witnessed by themselves. If those of any other nation had recorded them, they must have had their accounts from the people of *Israel*. And if they had declared their belief of those facts, and of the divine authority of those laws, there would have been an equal pretence for rejecting their testimony, as for rejecting that of the *Jews*. But it is in truth very absurd to make it an objection, that the accounts of these facts are transmitted to us by those who were the only proper persons to give an account of those facts, and by whom alone those accounts could have been originally given, if they had been true. If it be pretended, that the facts were feigned by them to do honour to their nation, it must be considered, that, as was before hinted, they are so circumstanced, and mixed with

LETTER with such disadvantageous accounts of the temper and conduct of that people, as no man would have feigned who had their honour in view, or who had not a greater regard to the truth of the facts, than to the humouring and flattering that people. For it is plain, the facts might have been so contrived, if they had been fictitious, as to have saved the honour of their nation, and not to have given occasion to the severe censures and reproaches which have been cast upon them in all ages on that account. And what farther derives great credit to the relations of those extraordinary and miraculous facts, is that the books in which they are contained, not only appear to have been written with an unaffected simplicity, and a sincere impartial regard to truth, mixed with a profound veneration for the Deity, but they contain the most remarkable predictions of future events, which it was impossible for any human sagacity to foresee; particularly relating to the future fates of that nation, the surprising revolutions they should undergo, the calamities, captivities, and desolations that should befall them, their being scattered and dispersed all over the face of the earth, and every-where exposed to hatred, contempt, and reproach, and yet still wonderfully preserved as a distinct people, as we see they are at this day; notwithstanding they have for so many ages lost their genealogies, and been deprived of their most valued privileges, and rendered incapable of exercising their most solemn sacred rites

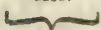
as prescribed in their law, and without any prophets raised up among them, and acknowledged by themselves to be such, to support their hopes. These are things for which no parallel can be found in any other nation upon earth. So that the present state of that people, in all respects so extraordinary, is a living proof of the truth and divinity of those writings, which contain an account of the laws that were originally given them, and of the wonderful facts by which those laws were enforced and established. This is a proof still stronger to us, than it could have been in the ages soon after those books were written, and affordeth one instance in which the evidence of those facts, instead of being diminished by time, has acquired new strength and force.

LETTER
XI.

You will forgive the length of this letter, as I was willing to lay together in one view all that I thought necessary for clearing and establishing the truth of the *Mosaic* history against our author's objections, and which, if it be well supported, the divinity of those laws, and of that constitution, follows with invincible evidence.



LETTER



L E T T E R X I I .

The excellent nature and tendency of the Mosaic Writings, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Lord Bolingbroke treats it as blasphemy to say that they are divinely inspired. A summary of his objections against their divine original and authority. His charge against the Scriptures as giving mean and unworthy ideas of God considered at large. The representations he himself gives of God, and of his providence, shewn to be unworthy, and of the worst consequence. Concerning God's being represented in Scripture as entering into covenant with man. The pretence of his being described as a tutelary God to Abraham, and to the people of Israel, and of his being degraded to the meanest offices and employments, distinctly examined. The passages in which bodily parts seem to be ascribed to God, not designed to be taken in a literal sense. The Scripture itself sufficiently guards against a wrong interpretation of these passages. In what sense human passions and affections are attributed to the Supreme Being. A remarkable passage of Mr. Collins to this purpose.

S I R,

S I R,

LETTER

XII.

THE design of my last Letter was to vindicate the truth and credit of the *Mosaic* History, and of the extraordinary facts there related. And if that History be admitted as true, the divine original and authority of the *Mosaic* constitution is established. But besides the external proofs arising from the extraordinary and miraculous facts, whosoever with an unprejudiced mind looks into the Revelation itself as contained in the sacred writings of the Old Testament, may observe remarkable internal characters, which demonstrate its excellent nature and tendency. Not to repeat what has been already offered to this purpose in the former Volume, Let. XV. p. 478, *et seq.* at present I shall only observe, that in the *Mosaic* writings, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament, we are taught to form the worthiest notions of God, of his incomparable perfections, and of his governing providence, as extending over all his works, particularly towards mankind. We are at the same time instructed in the true state of our own case, as we are weak, dependent, guilty creatures, and are directed to place our whole hope and trust in God alone, and to refer all to him, as our chiefest good, and highest end; to be thankful to him for all the good things we enjoy, and to be patient and resigned to his will under all the afflictive events that befall us. Our moral duty is there set before us in its just extent.

LETTER

XII.

tent. The particulars of it are laid down in plain and exprefs precepts, inforced upon us in the name and by the authority of God himſelf, where love of righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and purity, and juſt deteſtation of vice and wickedneſs, is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt manner. Thoſe ſacred writings every-where abound with the moſt encouraging declarations of his grace and mercy towards the truly penitent, and with the moſt awful denunciations of his juſt diſpleaſure againſt obſtinate preſumptuous tranſgreſſors. And the important leſſon which runs through the whole is this, that we are to make the pleaſing and ſerving God the chief buſineſs of our lives, and that our happineſs conſiſteth in his favour, which is only to be obtained in the uniform practice of piety and virtue.

Such evidently is the nature and tendency of the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament. But very different is the representation made of them by Lord *Bolingbroke*. Not content with endeavouring to deſtroy the credit of the hiſtory, he hath by arguments drawn from the nature of the revelation itſelf contained in the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, uſed his utmoſt efforts to ſhew, that it is abſolutely unworthy of God: That “there
“are marks of an human original in thoſe
“books, which point out plainly the fraud,
“and the impoſture *.” And that “it is no leſs
“than blaſphemy to aſſert them to be divinely
“inſpired †.”

* Vol. III. p. 288.

† *Ib.* p. 299.

The objections he has advanced against the LETTER Scriptures of the Old Testament, and especially XII. against the *Mosaic* writings, are principally these that follow :

1. That they give the most unworthy ideas of the Supreme Being. They degrade him to the meanest offices and employments, and attribute to him human passions, and even the worst of human imperfections.

2. Some of the laws there given are absolutely contrary to the law of nature, which is the law of God, and therefore cannot be of divine original. He instanceth particularly in the command for extirpating the *Canaanites*, and for punishing idolaters with death.

3. The first principle of the law of *Moses* is insociability ; and it took the *Jews* out of all moral obligations to the rest of mankind.

4. There are several passages in the *Mosaic* writings, which are false, absurd, and unphilosophical : As particularly the account there given of the creation of the world, and the fall of man.

5. The sanctions of the law of *Moses* were wholly of a temporal nature, and were contrived and fitted to humour and gratify the appetites and passions ; without any regard to a future state of rewards and punishments.

These are the principal objections urged by Lord *Bolingbroke* against the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and particularly of the books of *Moses*. There are some

LETTER

XII.

other smaller exceptions, which I shall take notice of as they come in my way.

1. The first class of objections relateth to the mean and unworthy representations that are made to us in Scripture of the Supreme Being. It hath always been accounted one of the distinguishing excellencies of the sacred writings, that they abound with the most just and sublime descriptions and representations of the Deity, which have a manifest tendency to raise our minds to the most worthy and exalted conceptions of his divine majesty, and his incomparable excellencies and perfections. Our author himself thinks fit to acknowledge, that “there are many passages in Scripture, which give most sublime ideas of the majesty of the Supreme Being:” And that “the conceptions which the *Jews* entertained of the Supreme Being were very orthodox in the eye of reason; and their Psalmists, and their prophets, strained their imaginations to express the most celebrated sentiments of God, and of his works, and of the methods of his providence *.” If therefore there be any passages which, literally taken, seem to be unworthy of God, they ought, by all the rules of candour and fair criticism, to be interpreted in a consistency with these; since it cannot be reasonably supposed, that those who entertained such noble and sublime sentiments of the Divinity, should at the same time, as he would persuade us they

* Vol. III. p. 99.—Vol. IV. p. 463.

did, form the meanest and unworthiest concep-
tions of him.

LETTER
XII.

But let us consider the particulars of his charge; and it amounts in effect to this: That the Scriptures degrade the Supreme Being, by representing him as descending to the meanest offices and employments: And that they attribute to him human passions, and even the worst of human imperfections.

As to the first part of the charge, the degrading the divine majesty to the meanest, the unworthiest, offices and employments, he observes, that according to the *Mosaic* account, “ the Supreme Being condescended to be the tutelary God of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, “ and under this character he acted a part which “ a sensible heathen, not transported by presumptuous notions of his own importance, “ nor by the impudence of enthusiasm, would “ have thought too mean and too low for any “ of his inferior Gods or Demons *.” This objection he frequently repeats in various forms. He introduces one of the heathen sages as alleging, that “ among the *Mosaic* superstitions “ there was one, which could be charged neither on the *Egyptians*, nor any other heathen nation, and which surpassed the most “ extravagant of theirs; and this was, that the “ Supreme Being is represented as having taken “ upon him a name which was a very magnificent one indeed, and such as might denote

* Vol. III. p. 304.

LETTER
XII.

“ the Supreme Being, but still a name by which
 “ he might be distinguished as the tutelary God
 “ of one family first, and then of one nation
 “ particularly, and almost exclusively of all
 “ others*.” But there is no passage where he
 pushes this objection more strongly than in
 p. 463. of Vol. IV. where he observes, that
 “ the eternal and infinite Being is represented
 “ in the *Jewish* histories, and in the whole sy-
 “ stem of their religion, as a local tutelar Deity,
 “ carried about in a trunk, or residing in a
 “ temple; as an ally, who had entered into co-
 “ venant with their fathers; as a king, who
 “ had actually held the reins of their govern-
 “ ment; and as an industrious magistrate, who
 “ descended into all the particulars of religious
 “ and civil administration, even into the most
 “ minute and meanest. Thus were the *Jews*
 “ accustomed to familiarize themselves with the
 “ Supreme Being, and to imagine that he fa-
 “ miliarized with them, and to figure him to
 “ themselves receiving their sacrifices, and listen-
 “ ing to their prayers, sometimes at least, as
 “ grossly, as *Lucian* represents *Jupiter*.” He
 seems to think the heathens were in the right,
 when they blamed the *Jews* for “ bringing the
 “ first and only God too near to man, and
 “ making him an actor immediately and per-
 “ sonally as it were in the creation and govern-
 “ ment of the world †.” And he had before
 observed, that according to the Scripture, “ the

* Vol IV. p. 34.

† *Id.* p. 463.

“ correspondence

“ correspondence between God and man was
“ often immediate, and even intimate and fa-
“ miliar with his elect, and with such purified
“ souls as were prepared for it. — And that the
“ whole tenor of the sacred writings repre-
“ sented the Supreme Being in frequent confer-
“ ences with his creatures, God covenanting
“ and making bargains with man, and man
“ with God; God holding the language of man,
“ reasoning, arguing, expostulating, in a very
“ human manner, animated by human affecti-
“ ons, and appealing to human knowlege *.”

Before I enter on a particular discussion of what his Lordship hath here offered, it is proper to observe, that though in a passage just now cited, the *Jews* seem to be blamed for bringing the Supreme Being *too near to man*, and supposing him to be an *actor immediately, and as it were personally, in the government of the world*; yet he elsewhere finds fault with the heathen philosophers for excluding the *Monad* or Supreme Unity from the creation and government of the world, and *banishing him almost intirely from the system of his works*, whereby he *became in some sort a non-entity, an abstract or notional being* †. And he censures them for “ imaging a divine monarchy, on a
“ human plan, the administration of which was
“ not carried on by the immediate agency of
“ God himself, but mediately, as in terrestrial
“ monarchies, by that of inferior agents, ac-

* Vol. IV. p. 155. † *Ib.* p. 466.

LETTER XII. “ cording to the ranks and provinces allotted
 “ them *.” And to this notion he thinks a con-
 “ siderable part of the heathen idolatry is to be
 ascribed. It is hard to know what idea this
 writer would have us form of the divine govern-
 ment. On the one hand, he seems to think it
 a demeaning the majesty of the Supreme Being
 to suppose him to *act immediately and person-
 ally as it were* in the government of the world :
 And on the other hand, he will not allow, that
 the divine administration is carried on *mediately*
 by the ministry of inferior agents. And if
 God does not govern the world, either by his
 own personal immediate agency, or by that of
 subordinate agents and instruments, it cannot
 easily be conceived in what sense he can be said
 to govern the world at all.

Indeed any one that impartially considers the
 several passages above-mentioned relating to the
Jewish Scriptures, and many others of the like
 kind, which occur in Lord *Bolingbroke's* writ-
 ings, and compares them with the scheme
 which he himself hath advanced, and of which
 an account was given in the seventh Letter, will
 be apt to think that the real original ground of
 his prejudices against the sacred writings is this :
 That they every-where represent God as interest-
 ing himself in the affairs of men, whereas he
 looks upon it to be unworthy of the divine ma-
 jesty to suppose that he now concerneth himself
 about them, or exerciseth any care with respect

to the individuals of the human race. And LETTER XII. since he asserts, that “ the most elevated of finite “ intelligent beings are not a jot nearer to the “ Supreme Intelligence than the lowest *,” he must, upon his scheme, think it as unbecoming the majesty of God to exercise any special care towards the highest of angelical beings, or whatever inhabitants there may be in any part of this vast universe, as towards the individuals of mankind. This scheme is not only, as was shewn before, of a most pernicious tendency, and manifestly subversive of all religion, and the fear of God, but at the bottom argueth, notwithstanding all its glorious pretences, very dishonourable and unworthy conceptions of the Supreme Being. For either it supposeth him to be not present to the creatures he hath made, which is to deny the immensity of his essence, or that if he be present, he hath not a certain knowledge of them, and of their actions and affairs, and consequently is not omniscient : Though our author himself says, “ it may be demonstrated, that the All-perfect Being must be “ omniscient, as well as self-existent †.” Or that if he hath a perfect knowledge of the actions and affairs of his reasonable creatures, yet he is absolutely indifferent about them, whether they obey his laws or not, whether good or evil, virtue or vice, happiness or misery, prevail in the moral world. This must be owned to be very well suited to the character of an *Epicurean*

* Vol. IV. p. 183.

† Vol. V. p. 36.

LETTER ^{XII.} deity, whose happiness consisteth in an eternal indolence, and who is supposed to be of a nice and delicate constitution, unable to bear the noise, the clamours, and confusion, of this lower world, but is no-way consistent with the idea of the Infinitely-perfect Being. How much nobler is the idea that is given us of the Deity in the Holy Scriptures! Where he is represented as filling heaven and earth with his presence, and exercising a constant inspection over all his creatures, and all their actions, as disposing and ordering all events, without distraction or confusion, in such a manner, as in the final issue of things to provide for the happiness of those that sincerely obey him, and go on in the practice of righteousness and virtue, and to manifest a just displeasure against those who obstinately persist in an impertinent course of vice and wickedness; and in a word, as governing the world, and all the orders of beings in it, with infinite wisdom, righteousness, and equity, and with the same almighty facility with which he created them! Such an idea of God is not only of the greatest consequence to the interests of religion and virtue in the world, but is infinitely more august and noble in itself, and more conformable to the highest notions we can form of infinite perfection, than that which this writer would substitute in its stead.

I shall not add any thing here to what was offered in my seventh Letter, concerning a particular providence as extending even to the individuals

viduals of the human race. If providence doth not interpose in human affairs at all, it cannot be expected that God should at any time communicate extraordinary discoveries and revelations of his will to mankind. But if, as hath been shewn, providence doth concern itself even for individuals, and for promoting human happiness, in a way consistent with moral agency, it is very reasonable to suppose, that it may please God to make discoveries and revelations of his will, for promoting the knowlege and practice of religion and virtue in the world, and that he may communicate such discoveries to particular persons, or to larger communities, in such a way as may best answer the intentions of his wise and holy providence, of which he must be allowed to be the properest judge. And if he seeth fit to make such revelations of his will, they must be communicated in such a manner as is accommodated to human understandings, and fitted to work upon human affections; and therefore if they be addressed to men in a way of *reasoning*, *arguing*, and *expostulating*, it would be absurd to make this an objection, as this writer seems to do, since there is nothing in this, but what is wisely suited to the end we may suppose the Supreme Wisdom and Goodness to have had in view in giving such revelations.

He represents it as altogether unworthy of the Supreme Being to suppose him to enter into covenant with man: And in order

to

LETTER to expose this, he is pleased to represent it under
 XII. the mean idea of God's *making bargains with*
man, or man with God. But if we consider
 what is really intended by it, we shall find, that
 a covenant in this case is properly to be under-
 stood of a conditional promise, whereby blessings
 and benefits are promised on God's part, and du-
 ties required on ours: It is a law of God en-
 joining obedience, with a promise or promises
 annexed to it, by which God condescendeth to
 oblige himself to confer certain benefits upon
 his creatures, the subjects of his moral govern-
 ment, if they fulfil and obey the injunctions he
 hath laid upon them, and comply with the terms
 which he hath appointed. And considered in
 this view, it is so far from being a just objection
 against the sacred writings, that it may be re-
 garded as their great excellency, and what should
 mightily recommend them to our esteem, that
 God is there represented as dealing with man in
 a way of covenant; that is, in a way admi-
 rably suited to us as we are reasonable creatures,
 moral agents. By this God doth not divest him-
 self of his character and authority as our su-
 preme universal Lord. He hath an undoubted
 right to give laws to his creatures, and lay what
 commands or injunctions upon them he seeth fit,
 in a way of absolute sovereignty, without bring-
 ing himself under any promises and engage-
 ments; but he condescendeth in his marvellous
 wisdom and goodness to encourage and animate
 our obedience by express promises and assur-

ances of his grace and favour ; and we on our parts bring ourselves under the most solemn engagements, which bind us more strictly to our duty by our own express consent, than which no way of dealing with us can have a greater tendency to promote our comfort, and the interests of religion and virtue in the world.

As to the particular covenant made with *Abraham*, and God's engaging as he loves to express it, to be a *tutelary God* to him ; this put into other words signifies no more than this, that it pleased God to grant to this excellent person express promises of his special grace and favour upon condition of his faith and obedience ; and particularly, that he promised to give the land of *Canaan* to his descendants, and that from him should proceed that glorious person, who had been promised from the beginning, and who was actually to come into the world in the fulness of time, and in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. This covenant made with *Abraham* was not only proper, as it was a distinguishing mark of the divine favour and goodness to a person, who was an eminent example of piety and virtue, and the fame of whose excellent qualities is spread all over the East even to this day, but as it made a part of a glorious scheme which the divine wisdom had in view, and which was to be accomplished in the fittest season, and to be of extensive benefit to mankind. So that this particular covenant

was

LETTER was really intended in a subserviency to the general good.

With regard to the covenant made with the people of *Israel* at *Horeb*, the design of it was to erect a sacred polity, the fundamental article of which was the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God, the Maker and Governor of the world, free from all idolatry and polytheism. This transaction was carried on with a majesty and solemnity becoming the great Lord of the universe, and which tended to inspire the profoundest veneration for him, and for the laws he was pleased to promulgate. And at the same time it was wisely ordered, that the people should bind themselves by their own express consent, and solemn stipulation, to receive that constitution, and obey those laws. The moral laws given to that people were excellent: The judicial laws just and equitable: The ceremonial laws were instituted for wise reasons, some of which we are able to assign at this distance; and there is no doubt to be made, that if we were well acquainted with the circumstances of that time and people, we should be convinced of the great propriety of many of those ceremonious injunctions, which now we are not able particularly to account for. Our author talks of the priest's *wearing a ridiculous cap and breast-plate, fringes, and bells*, and thinks it absurd to suppose that *such trifles as these were the institutions of divine wisdom*.*

* Vol. V. p. 93.

But it was wisely ordered under that constitution, that nothing relating to divine worship should be left to their own invention. It was judged proper to give them rules descending even to minute particulars, and to confine them to those rules, the more effectually to hinder them from deviating into endless superstitions. The particulars referred to contributed to promote order and decency in the externals of religious service ; nor was there any thing in the *Jewish* instituted rites absurd, indecent, ridiculous, or impure, as were many of the rites in use among the Pagan nations.

As to God's being a tutelary Deity to the people of *Israel*, this, if stripped of the form of expression which he has chosen in order to ridicule it, only signifies, that God was pleased to make special revelations and discoveries of his will to that people, and to give them holy and excellent laws, at the same time promising if they obeyed those laws, to grant them his special protection, to honour them with great privileges and advantages, and to make them happy in the effects of his grace and favour ; and threatening, if they proved obstinate and disobedient, to inflict upon them awful punishments, the tokens of his righteous displeasure. And that there is any thing in this unbecoming the wise and righteous Lord and Governor of the world, supposing him to concern himself in human affairs, this writer has not proved, except confident assertions must pass for proofs. And as to his

LETTER
XII.

being the King of *Israel*, this is not to be understood as if he did not still continue to be the universal Sovereign and Lord of all mankind. He was never regarded as having divested himself of that character. No-where is his universal dominion, and governing providence, as extending to all his creatures, and especially to the whole human race, more strongly asserted, or more nobly described, than in the *Jewish* Scriptures. But it pleased him, for wise purposes, to erect a peculiar constitution among the people of *Israel*, according to which he condescended to be, in a special sense, their King and Sovereign. And what we are to understand by it is properly this, That he gave them laws at the first establishment of their polity, which were to be the rule of their state, and by which they were to be governed; and upon their observance of which the preservation of their national privileges depended; and that he raised up judges and governors, who were to rule them in his name, and as by his authority, and to be the leaders and generals of their armies, for delivering them from their enemies and oppressors: And he was pleased also to give them direction in matters of great and public moment, by the oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*, which was by his appointment established among them for that purpose. There was nothing in all this but what was wisely suited to the nature and design of that particular constitution, and tended to confirm and establish that people in the belief
and

and adoration of the one true God, and to exhibit a glorious sensible proof of his governing providence among them. But the theocracy was never designed to supersede the office and authority of the ordinary magistrates, as this writer seems to insinuate, by telling us, that under that constitution God “acted as an industrious magistrate, who descended into all the particulars of religious and civil administration, even into the most minute and meanest.” For though the laws were originally given by God, the execution of those laws was ordinarily vested in the magistrates appointed for that purpose, and chosen by the people in their several tribes. So they were in the days of *Moses*, and under the judges, when the people were more properly and immediately under the administration of the theocracy.

But it is farther urged, that God is represented in the *Jewish* Scriptures as a *local Deity*, residing and dwelling in a temple, or carried about by the *Levites* in a wooden chest or trunk. The author seems fond of this observation, for he has it over three or four times on different occasions. But by this reflection he has exposed himself rather than the *Jews*. That people, instructed by their Scriptures, had nobler notions of the Deity, than to be capable of imagining, that the Lord of the universe, who, they were taught to believe, made and governeth the world, and filleth heaven and earth, was shut up and confined in a wooden chest. It

LETTER ^{XII.} is true, that the more effectually to preserve that people from idolatry, and to impress and affect their minds with a lively sense of God's special presence among them, there was one sacred place appointed, the tabernacle first, and temple afterwards, which was peculiarly dedicated to his solemn worship and service. There their most solemn acts of devotion were to be performed. And there was the ark or sacred chest he speaks of, in which were deposited the tables of the original covenant between God and them: There also was a cloud of glory, the majestic symbol of God's immediate presence. It cannot be reasonably denied, that God may, if he thinks fit, give illustrious exhibitions of his divine presence and majesty by a visible external glory and splendor, in certain places, or on certain occasions. But it doth not follow, that he is therefore a limited Being, or that his essence is circumscribed, or confined to that particular place, where it pleaseth him thus peculiarly to manifest his special presence. How far the *Israelites* were from forming such mean notions of the Divinity as this writer is pleased to insinuate, we have an authentic proof in the admirable prayer offered up by *Solomon* at the dedication of the temple, in the name and presence of all the people; in which he addresseth himself to God in that noble manner: *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee,*

thee, how much less this house which I have LETTER
builded? 1 Kings viii. 27. See also *Is.* lxi. 1. XII.

It has often given me great pleasure to reflect upon what every one that impartially considers the Scriptures of the Old Testament must be sensible of, that the *Jews*, if they governed themselves by their sacred Writings, were instructed, in their ideas of God, to unite the most incomprehensible greatness and majesty, and the most marvellous grace and condescension: To regard him as filling heaven and earth with the immensity of his presence, and yet as vouchsafing to grant visible tokens and symbols of his special presence among them by his ark and temple: As humbling himself even in beholding the things that are done in heaven, and yet as regarding the things that are done in the earth. They acknowledged the glorious hosts of angels as the attendants of the divine majesty, the blessed ministers of his power and wisdom; but still as infinitely inferior, and even *chargeable with folly* before him: And instead of erecting them into Deities, and adoring them as the heathens did, they called upon them to join with men in worshipping and adoring the supreme universal Lord. They were ready to cry out with a devout admiration in the contemplation of God's unequalled dignity and glory, *Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? What is man that thou art mindful of him?* But they did not under this pretence represent him as taking no notice of

LETTER men, or their concernments. They considered
 XII. him as infinitely raised above the highest of his creatures, yet not neglecting or despising the meanest: That *his name is exalted above all blessing and praise*, and yet he hath a gracious regard to our prayers and praises, if offered up from sincere and upright hearts. Thus they were taught in Scripture to celebrate and adore his matchless grace and condescending goodness, without impairing the splendor and glory of his infinite majesty. And accordingly in the patterns of devotion that are set before us in Scripture, we may observe the most adoring thoughts, the most sublime conceptions, of God's unsearchable greatness, and supreme dominion, and spotless purity; and the most humbling sense of human weakness, guilt, and unworthiness, mixed with an ingenuous confidence in his infinite grace and sovereign mercy.

Thus I have considered pretty largely that part of the objection, which chargeth the Scriptures with degrading the Deity to mean and unworthy offices and employments; and shall now take some notice of the other part of the charge, *viz.* That the Scriptures ascribe to him bodily parts, and human passions and affections, and even those of the worst kind.

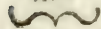
With respect to the former, he observeth, That the *Jewish* Scriptures ascribe to God "not only
 " corporeal appearances, but corporeal action,
 " and all the instruments of it, eyes, ears, mouth,
 " hands,

“ hands, and feet. — And that they are apt in
 “ many places to make those who read them re-
 “ present the Supreme Being to themselves like
 “ an old man looking out of the clouds *.”
 He says, “ the literal signification of such ex-
 “ pressions is abominable.” And he ridicules
 those who throw what he calls a *flimsy allegori-
 cal veil* over them, as having *stolen it from the
 wardrobe of Epicurus*. But the ridicule lights
 upon himself, who I believe was the first man
 that would have thought of having recourse to
Epicurus to interpret the sense of *Moses*. There
 needs no more than common attention, and a
 comparing the Scripture with itself, to be con-
 vinced that it is incapable of the absurd inter-
 pretation he would put upon those passages.
 He observes indeed, that “ images taken from
 “ corporeal substance, from corporeal action,
 “ and from the instruments of it, cannot give
 “ us notions in any degree proper of God’s
 “ manner of being, nor of that divine uncon-
 “ ceivable energy in which the action of God
 “ consists.” Nor are those expressions of hands,
 feet, eyes, and ears, when ascribed to God in
 Scripture, designed to signify either the manner
 of his being, or of his divine energy, concern-
 ing which there are many noble expressions in
 the sacred writings, which have an admirable
 sublimity in them; but by an easy metaphor
 understood by all the world, hands signify power,
 eyes and ears signify knowlege. And whereas

* Vol. V. p. 520.

LETTER

XII.



he adds, that “ they cannot exalt, they must de-
 “ base our conceptions, and accustom the mind
 “ insensibly to confound divine with human
 “ ideas and notions, God with man.” The
 answer is obvious, That sufficient care is taken
 in the holy Scriptures to prevent this by furnish-
 ing us with the most sublime ideas of the Divi-
 nity, that can possibly enter into the human
 mind. God’s incomprehensible majesty, his im-
 mense greatness, his almighty power, the infi-
 niteness of his understanding, his omnipresence,
 are frequently represented and described in so
 admirable a manner, as shews with the last de-
 gree of evidence, that the expressions which
 seem to ascribe bodily parts and members to him
 cannot be understood in a gross literal sense.
 Our author himself, ascribing motives to God,
 observes, that “ we must speak of God after
 “ the manner of men *.” And indeed we
 must either not speak of God at all, or we must
 speak of him in ways of expression, originally
 derived from something relating to our own
 bodies or minds. This writer elsewhere insi-
 nuates, that we resemble God no more in our
 souls than we do in our bodies; and that to say
 his intellect is like ours, is as bad as the anthro-
 pomorphites†. So that, according to him, ex-
 pressions drawn from the faculties of the soul,
 are as improper as those drawn from the mem-
 bers of the body. Thus under pretence of a
 profound veneration for the Deity, we must not

* Vol. V. p. 468.

† Ib. p. 35.

speak of God at all, as some of the antient philosophers thought it unlawful to name him, or to worship him, except in silence. Yea, we must not so much as think of him; for our ideas of God fall no doubt infinitely short of his real majesty and glory, as well as our expressions. But it may be observed, that this forward censurer falls into that way of talking himself which he finds fault with in the holy Scriptures. He represents God as *speaking to men* by the law of nature: He calls it the *voice of God*, and the *word of God*. He speaks of the *hands of God**, and of his *seeing* all things. And though he represents the ascribing ideas to God as no less improper, and even profane, than the ascribing hands and feet to him, yet on several occasions he talks of the *divine ideas*.

But he farther urges, that the Scriptures attribute to God human affections and passions, and even those of the worst kind: That “they impute such things to the divinity as would be a disgrace to humanity †:” That “the *Jewish* system contained such instances of partiality in love and hatred, of furious anger, and unrelenting vengeance, in a long series of arbitrary judgments, as no people on earth but this would have ascribed, I do not say to God, but to the worst of those monsters, who are suffered or sent by God, for a short time, to punish the iniquities of men ‡,” To the

* Vol. IV. p. 395.


† Vol. III. p. 299.

‡ Vol. V. p. 515.

LETTER
XII.

same purpose he afterwards observes, that according to the representations made in Scripture, God “ loves with partiality, his mercy is “ arbitrary, and depends on mere will—And “ towards mankind his anger is often furious, “ his hatred inveterate, his vengeance unrelenting : But when the wicked repent of their “ sins, he repents sometimes of his severity.” And then he asks, “ What a description is this “ of the All perfect Being ?” But this description is his own, and is founded upon a gross misrepresentation of the true intention and design of the sacred writings. As to loving with partiality, it by that be meant his favouring and distinguishing some with greater privileges and advantages, and giving them more valuable means of improvement than others ; nothing can be more evident than that this has been often and still is done in the course of his providence. Nor is this any more to be found fault with than his making different species of beings, some vastly transcending others in their faculties, and capacities for happiness. He is the absolute Lord and dispenser of his own gifts, and his goodness is that of a free and sovereign Benefactor ; and it would be the height of absurdity and profaneness to pretend to tie him down to give to all men precisely the same capacities, the same advantages and opportunities, and to limit him so that he shall not dispense his gifts in such measures and proportions as he thinks fit, nor shall have it in his power to do any thing for any
one

one person or people, but what he does pre-^{LETTER}
cisely for every person and for all people. But ^{XII.}
if by *partiality* be meant partiality in judgment,
and in the distribution of rewards and punish-
ments, it is very unjust to charge the holy Scrip-
tures as attributing such partiality to the Supreme
Being. There is nothing more strongly and
expressly asserted there than that God *accepteth*
not the persons of men, and that he *judgeth*
without respect of persons. It is evident, not
merely from a single passage, but from the whole
tenor of the sacred writings, that the righteous
Lord loveth righteousness, that he extendeth his
favour to all those of the human race, of what-
soever family or nation, who sincerely love and
obey him, and go on in a course of real piety
and virtue: That such persons alone can hope
for an interest in his favour, and to obtain the
divine acceptance and approbation: And that
all wicked and presumptuous sinners of whatso-
ever nation or profession, shall be exposed to
his just displeasure. Nor are there any such
things ascribed to God in Scripture as *arbitrary*
judgments. And whereas this writer charges it as
unworthy of God to represent him as *repenting*
of his severity when the wicked repent of their
sins; the thing really intended by this must be
acknowledged to be agreeable to the best ideas
we can form of his governing wisdom, righte-
ousness, and goodness. For it only signifies,
that when sinners forsake their evil ways, God
is graciously pleased to change the methods of
his

LETTER
XII.  his dealings towards them, and is willing to receive them to his grace and favour. But in reality there is no change in the divine purposes or councils. The change that is wrought is in the mind and temper of the sinner : God acts uniformly according to the stated rules of his administrations ; and nothing has happened but what he perfectly foreknew. But repenting in a strict and proper sense, as it is a mark of human imperfection and mutability, is expressly denied of God in the holy Scripture ; where we are assured, that *God is not as the son of man that he should repent.*

As to the expressions of anger, wrath, fury, hatred, vengeance, as ascribed to God in the sacred writings, it is a thing so obvious that it can scarce be mistaken, that these are only strong expressions designed to impress the hearts of men with a more lively sense of God's righteous displeasure against sin and wickedness, and resolution to punish it ; which it is of the highest importance to mankind to consider and believe. Any one that allows himself to consider impartially, must be sensible, that such ways of representing things are absolutely necessary in a revelation designed for common use ; and that it is far more for the good of the world in general, and for promoting the interests of virtue, and restraining vice and wickedness, that men should conceive of God as loving and taking pleasure in the good and righteous, and as full of just resentment against evil doers, than

as utterly unconcerned about the actions and affairs of men, or alike affected towards the righteous and the wicked. Yea, the former notions are not only more useful, and of better influence, but more just and rational in themselves, and more worthy of the All-perfect Being. For what idea is this of God, to represent him as neither delighting in order and virtue, nor displeased with vice and wickedness, but solacing himself in an eternal indolence, and no way concerned about the good or ill behaviour, the happiness or misery of his reasonable creatures! A God destitute of all affections, or of any thing correspondent to them, would not be the most perfect Being. There are spiritual affections, which have nothing to do with body, and which as properly belong to spirits or minds, as intellect or will; and I can as easily suppose them destitute of the latter as of the former. Our affections indeed have usually a great mixture of bodily passions, and consequently of imperfection. But there are affections of a nobler kind, and which we may conceive in pure spirits, yea, they cannot be conceived without them. Nor can we avoid ascribing some affections, or what is analogous or equivalent to them, to God, provided we remove from them all those imperfections and defects with which they are attended in us. A love of order, goodness, purity, virtue, and a just detestation of moral evil, is absolutely inseparable from

LETTER from the idea of the Infinitely-perfect Being,
 XII. the most wise and righteous Governor of the
 world.

I shall conclude my observations on this part of Lord *Bolingbroke's* book with a passage from an author, whom no man will suppose to have been prejudiced in favour of the Scriptures. It is Mr. *Anthony Collins*, in an *Essay* which he published in 1707. *concerning the use of reason in propositions, the evidence whereof depends upon human testimony.* After having observed, that "one use of reason in things which by the
 " testimony of men are supposed to come from
 " God, is to endeavour to find out such a sense
 " of a supposed divine revelation as is agreeable
 " to the discoveries of our reason, if the words
 " under any kind of construction will bear it;
 " though at first view they may seem repugnant
 " to reason, and to one another;" he adds,
 " This is certainly a great piece of justice, and
 " what is due to words that upon the least evi-
 " dence can be supposed to come from God,
 " especially since expressions that do not lit-
 " rally quadrate with the maxims of reason and
 " philosophy, are necessary to make a revela-
 " tion have any effect upon common people's
 " minds. For was not God to be represented
 " by expressions, which literally understood at-
 " tribute to him human passions and actions,
 " they who by their occupations in the world
 " are incapable of those more just ideas which
 " men of thought know to belong to that Be-
 " ing,

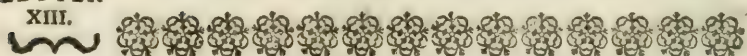
“ ing, would perhaps think him incapable of LETTER
XII.
 “ taking cognizance of their actions: And
 “ therefore to make a revelation *useful* and
 “ *credible in itself*, it must consist of words
 “ whose *literal* meaning is false, but whose *real*
 “ meaning is consistent with the justest notions
 “ of reason and philosophy. And therefore
 “ we ought to examine whether the words un-
 “ der any construction will bear a reasonable
 “ sense,” p. 17, 18. Mr. *Collins* then applies
 this observation to the revelation which we ac-
 knowlege, and considers those passages of Scrip-
 ture where God is said to *rest*, *repent*, *be angry*,
&c. It must be owned, that this gentleman
 judges much more reasonably and equitably in
 this matter than Lord *Bolingbroke* has done.

This may suffice at present. In my next I
 shall consider the other objections which his
 Lordship hath urged against the divine authority
 of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, especi-
 ally of the *Mosaic* writings.



LETTER

XIII.



L E T T E R XIII.

Farther objections against the Mosaic Writings and the Scriptures of the Old Testament considered. The laws of Moses not contrary to the law of nature. This particularly shewn with regard to the command for exterminating the Canaanites, and the law for punishing those among the Israelites that should revolt to idolatry, with death. The law of Moses not accountable for the fury of the zealots. The instances of Phineas and Matathias considered. Insociability not the first principle of the law of Moses, nor did that law take the Jews out of all moral obligations to the rest of mankind. There is nothing false or absurd in the Mosaic account of the creation of the world, and the fall of man. Concerning the sanctions of the law of Moses. The not making express mention of future rewards and punishments in that law, no argument against its divine original. Some other objections against the Scriptures obviated.

S I R,

I Now proceed to another set of objections which are designed to shew that some of the laws of Moses are absolutely contrary to the law
of



of nature, which is the law of God, and therefore cannot come from him. He instances particularly in the command for exterminating the *Canaanites*, and the law for punishing idolaters among the *Israelites* with death.—“ In both “ which, he says, it is impiously supposed, “ against principles as self-evident, as any of “ those necessary truths, which are such of all “ knowlege, that the Supreme Being commands “ by one law what he forbids by another ||.” And that “ he approved and commanded on particular occasions the most abominable violations of the general laws of nature *.” I shall consider what he has offered with regard to each of these.

As to the command for exterminating the *Canaanites*, it is what he frequently inveighs against as the greatest piece of injustice and cruelty that ever was committed †. And he has pronounced, that “ the men who justify such cruelties upon “ any hypothesis whatsoever, must have very ill “ hearts as well as heads:” And that “ he who “ imputes them to the Supreme Being is worse “ than an atheist, though he pass for a saint ‡.” I shall venture however to examine what this rigid censurer has offered on this subject.

He first layeth it down as a principle, that “ God “ cannot command in particular what he forbids in general. He who has made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental

|| Vol. V. p. 180.

* *Ib.* p. 181.

† See particularly

Vol. III. p. 305. Vol. V. p. 99. 146.

‡ Vol. III. p. 306.

“ law


LETTER " law of our nature, can never command some
 XIII. " to rob or to murder others; to usurp on the
 " rights of their fellow-creatures, and to ex-
 " terminate whole nations*." The force of
 his argument here lies wholly in the words *rob*
 and *murder*, both which carry the idea of de-
 priving others of their lives and properties, with-
 out a just cause, and without lawful authority.
 But though God has forbidden us, both in the
 law of nature, and in the decalogue, to murder,
 he can command some to put others to death
 for just causes, in which case it is not murder.
 He never by giving this law to mankind divested
 himself of the dominion he hath over the lives
 of his creatures. He can also commission for
 wise ends some to deprive others of their pro-
 perties. For the law of nature is always to be
 understood with this limitation, except in cases
 where God himself shall otherwise appoint. It
 is no principle of that law, that God can never
 without injustice exterminate nations. That
 he can do it in a way of immediate judgment
 by sending destructive calamities, famines, pe-
 stilences, earthquakes, deluges, and the like,
 cannot be denied by any Theist, who believes
 a providence governing mankind, and interpo-
 sing in the affairs of men. And if he can do it
 immediately himself, he can commission men
 to do it, provided he gives sufficient credentials
 of that commission. And such the *Israelites*
 had according to the accounts given in the books

* Vol. V. p. 99.

of *Moses*. And in judging of the case, how far it is justifiable, we must take it in all its circumstances as there represented. Our author himself supposes the miracles done among them, if really done, to be sufficient to convince all mankind, not only at that time, but in all succeeding generations to the end of the world, of the divine authority of that law and constitution: And therefore sufficient to convince the people of *Israel*. All therefore that remained was that they should be satisfied of the truth of the facts, and of this they could not doubt, as they were done before their eyes. And the same books which give an account of the facts, give an account of the divine commission to the *Israelites*, and the reasons and ends of it. And whereas it is urged, that “the *Canaanites* were obnoxious to the divine vengeance in no other respect than that which was common to them with all the heathen nations, *viz.* their idolatry*.” This is not true according to the account given by *Moses*, *Levit.* xviii. 24, 25. 27. whereby it appears, that it was not merely for their idolatry, but for their monstrous vices and wickedness of all kinds, that they were ordered to be exterminated. And that never was there upon earth a more profligate and abandoned race of men. And supposing this to be true, and that God had determined to signalize his righteous vengeance against them in the severest manner, he might, without any pretence

LETTER
XIII.

* Vol. V. p. 184.

LETTER XIII.  for arraigning the justice of his proceedings, have consumed them by fire from heaven, as he did part of them at *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, or have overwhelmed them with an inundation, or have swallowed them up by an earthquake, and thereby utterly destroyed that people, their little ones as well as the adult. Nor could it have been said in such a case, that this was contrary to the law of nature. But then it would not have been so apparent, that this calamity was inflicted in a way of punishment for their idolatry and detestable wickedness. It might have been possibly attributed to some natural cause, or have been regarded as an unaccountable and fortuitous event. But when they were ordered to be exterminated for their abominable crimes by an express command of God, attested by a series of the most amazing miracles and divine interpositions; and this appointed to be executed by another nation, who were peculiarly set apart by their original constitution to the acknowledgement and adoration of the one true God, and of him only, and to whom God had given the most holy and excellent laws; at the same time threatening them with the like punishments if they committed the like crimes: In this case the reason of the judgment was as apparent, as when a malefactor is put to death by an officer of justice for a crime, in execution of the sentence of a just magistrate. Nor is there any thing in such a procedure, that can be proved to be inconsistent with the wisdom and righteousness

teousness of the Supreme Being, or contradictory to his own laws; since there is no law of nature that debars God from executing judgments on particular persons, or guilty nations for their crimes and vices even to extermination, or from employing, if he thinks fit, one or more nations to execute his judgments upon others. Nor has this confident and assuming writer brought any proof that it is so. As to his comparing the invasion of *Canaan* by the *Israelites*, and what they did there, to the cruelties exercised by the *Spaniards* in *America**, and to the ravages of the *Huns* under *Attila*, who, he says, were much more merciful than they †, there is this vast difference between the cases, that the latter had no motive or pretence, but their own ambition, avarice, and cruelty, whereas the former did it in execution of the express command of God, and by a commission from him, the truth of which was confirmed by a series of the most extraordinary divine attestations that ever the world saw. This therefore can be no precedent to any other nation to do the like, except they can produce the same or equal proofs of a divine commission; which no other since have been able to do, and probably never will. This may suffice with regard to the command for the extermination of the *Canaanites*: Which I have elsewhere considered more largely. See *Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation*,

* Vol. III. p. 305.

† Vol. V. p. 148.

LETTER Vol. II. p. p. 429. 437. And the *Answer to*
 XIII. *Morgan*, Vol. II. p. 97, *et seq.*

The other command produced by this author to prove that the law of *Moses* is contrary to the law of nature, and therefore cannot be of divine original, is the law for putting a false prophet to death that should attempt to seduce the people to idolatry, and for the inflicting a capital punishment upon any particular person among the *Israelites* that should revolt to idolatry, and even destroying a city that should do so. Concerning this he very dogmatically pronounces--- “I say, that the law of nature is
 “ the law of God. Of this I have the same
 “ demonstrative knowlege that I have of the
 “ existence of God the All-perfect Being. I
 “ say, that the All-perfect Being cannot con-
 “ tradict himself: That he would contradict
 “ himself, if the laws contained in the thir-
 “ teenth chapter of *Deuteronomy* were his laws,
 “ since they contradict those of nature: And
 “ therefore that they are not his laws. Of all
 “ this I have as certain, as intuitive a knowlege,
 “ as I have that two and two are equal to four,
 “ or that the whole is bigger than a part †.” A very short and decisive determination of the controversy! But we are by this time too well acquainted with his Lordship’s manner, to lay any great stress on his positive assertions, though delivered with the most assuming air.

† Vol. V. p. 191.

The argument he makes use of here is the same that he had used before, viz. that the law of nature forbids murder. This will be easily allowed. But it is not inconsistent with that law which forbids murder, to put persons to death, who are guilty of crimes that by the fundamental laws of the community deserve death. If God should have enacted a general law obligatory on all mankind, that whosoever should commit idolatry, or worship any other God, should be put to death, as well as that any man that should shed the blood of another without cause should be put to death; this author might be challenged with all his confidence to prove, that such a divine law would be contradictory to the law of nature. Idolatry by his own acknowledgement is forbidden in the law of nature, and is a breach of the first and great article of that law; and he represents it as *one of the greatest of crimes**. But God has not thought fit to enact a general law obligatory on all mankind for punishing idolaters with death, and without his appointment it ought not to be executed. But when it pleased him for wise ends to select a particular nation, and among them to erect a peculiar sacred polity, and to appoint that the adoration of the one true God and of him only, should be the very basis of their constitution, on which all their privileges, their national properties, and their right to their country depended, it is evident that un-

* Vol. V. p. 195.

LETTER ^{XIII.} order such a constitution to revolt to idolatry and polytheism, was in the most criminal sense to be traitors to the community: And to arraign a law for inflicting a capital punishment upon idolaters under that particular constitution, is highly absurd. Nor could any thing be more just in such a case, than to order that a false prophet, who should endeavour to seduce the people to idolatry, should be put to death: Though this writer objects against it as unjust for this strange reason, that “miracles were daily and “almost hourly wrought in the sight of all “*Israel**.” This is absolutely false, if understood of miracles strictly so called; or if it were true, it is an odd thing, to urge that which made the crime of the false prophet the greater, to be a reason for exempting him from punishment.

But what he chiefly finds fault with is the law for destroying any *Israelitish* city, that should fall off to the worship of idols, *Deut.* xiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. He urges, that “the innocent “were to be involved in the same punishment “with the guilty; neither man, nor woman, “nor beast, neither the brother, the daughter, “the wife, nor the friend was to be spared: “And that the whole chapter is such an edict “as could not be imputed to *Attila* without “injustice.”—And after exclaiming against the obstinacy of those that pretend to justify the law of *Moses* in this instance, he observes, that

* Vol. V. p. 183.

“ by that law, the undistinguishing extermina-
 “ tion of collective bodies, and especially for
 “ matters of opinion, is allowed*.” And af-
 “ afterwards, arguing against Mr. *Locke*, he adds,
 “ that “ even supposing God to be their King, the
 “ objections of injustice and cruelty in those
 “ laws will remain in their full force: And that
 “ to suppose him to have given these laws
 “ would be to degrade the All-perfect Being to
 “ the character of an unjust and cruel tyrant,
 “ who authorized and even commanded his mi-
 “ nisters expressly, to punish without measure,
 “ without discernment, and without forms of
 “ justice†.” And he insinuates, that there are
 precepts in that chapter “ from which the in-
 “ quisition copied the instructions she gives to
 “ her familiars§.” But this is a gross misrep-
 sentation. He himself elsewhere observes, that
 “ the cruel principle of persecution for opi-
 “ nions was never known, till Christians in-
 “ troduced it into the world‡;” though con-
 trary, as he owns, to the true spirit of the Gos-
 pel. And it is manifest that the punishments
 referred to *Deut. xiii.* were not to be inflicted
 for matters of opinion but of practice, for open
 acts of idolatry in subversion of the fundamental
 constitution of their state. And great care was
 to be taken, that the punishment should not be
 executed without due inquiry, and full proof.
 They were to *inquire*, and *make search*, and

LETTER
XIII.

* Vol. V. p. 184. † *Ib.* p. 194. § *Ib.* p. 183. ‡ *Ib.* p. 313.

LETTER

XIII.

ask diligently, so as to be assured that it was truth, and the thing certain. Great deliberation was to be used: And except the whole city was obstinately addicted to idolatry, and determined to persist in it, they were not to be exterminated. And considering the design and nature of that peculiar constitution, a decree or law for exterminating a city among themselves that should revolt to the worship of false Gods, seemed necessary, and was like the cutting off a corrupt or gangrened limb, which was requisite to save the whole. If God had at the original establishment of that polity, declared that he himself would in an immediate way by pestilence, or fire from heaven, or some other extraordinary judgment, exterminate or destroy any city among them, that should revolt to the worship of idols it could not be pretended that this would have been unjust, though children as well as adult would be involved in it. But he chose that the punishment should be inflicted in a judicial way by the hands of the magistrates, and by the authority of the nation or whole community, pursuant to a law for that purpose. And the punishment was both ordered to be executed with great solemnity, and to be attended with circumstances of peculiar severity, so as to proceed to utter extermination, the more effectually to create an horror and detestation of the crime, and to shew that so wicked a race was to be entirely destroyed. To which, it must be added, that this punishment was denounced

nounced in consequence of the original contract LETTER XIII.
 or covenant between God and that people. By coming into that covenant for themselves and their children, they voluntarily subjected themselves and them to the severest penalties in case of a revolt. And considering the mighty advantages they had as a nation by the theocracy, and by their peculiar constitution, and the signal blessings that would have followed upon their obedience, it was a condition which could not be reasonably objected against, since they might so easily avoid the threatened calamities, by obedience to a law so just and agreeable to reason, as is that of the worship of the one true God, the Lord of the universe, and of him only. And to have legally tolerated any among them, whether particular persons or communities, that should openly revolt to idolatry, would have been manifestly absurd, and absolutely subversive of their whole polity.

This writer takes particular notice of “ the
 “ right the zealots assumed to assassinate any
 “ *Jew*, that should seem to them to violate by
 “ public and strong appearances the sanctity of
 “ the divinity, of the temple, and of the na-
 “ tion: And that this produced such scenes of
 “ horror among the *Jews*, as no other nation
 “ ever produced.” It will be owned, that the
 zealots in the latter times of the *Jewish* state car-
 ried this to an excess of madness and fury; but
 the law is not accountable for it. It is evident
 from the thirteenth chapter of *Deuteronomy*,
 which

LETTER XIII. which orders the punishment of those that should revolt to idolatry, that the whole was to be transacted in an orderly and legal way, with great deliberation, and by public authority. And the same thing is repeated *Deut. xvii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.* where it is ordained, that with regard to any particular person that had served other Gods, they should before they punished him *enquire and search diligently.* And it is expressly appointed, that at *the mouth of two or three witnesses* he should be put to death, but that *at the mouth of one witness* he should not be put to death. Nor does Lord *Bolingbroke* pretend to produce any law to authorize the madness of the zealots. He only mentions two instances, which, he thinks, countenanced it, *viz.* that of *Phineas*, and that of *Matthias*. As to the former, he says, “*Phineas* murdered *Zimri* and *Cosbi*” in the act of fornication.” But this was not a simple act of fornication. It was joined with avowed idolatry, and, as it was circumstanced, was a most insolent defiance of all law and authority, one of the most flagrant crimes, in open opposition to God and Man, that could be committed. The person who inflicted the punishment was himself a chief magistrate, of high authority, and in a case which needed no proof, and admitted of no delay, when a plague from God was broke out among the people on the account of that very crime which these persons so impudently avowed: And it was also in consequence of an order which *Moses* had given by

the command of God to the judges of *Israel* to LETTER
XIII. slay those that were joined to *Baal Peor*. *Numbers* xxv. 4, 5. So that *Phineas* had full legal authority for what he did. And therefore this was no warrant to those who without any authority assassinated any man they thought fit under pretence of his violating the law, of which they set up themselves for judges: As to the instance of *Matthias*, our author observes, that “ in the fury of his holy zeal he rushed on the “ *Jew* that was about to sacrifice in obedience “ to the edict of *Antiochus*, and on the officer “ appointed to take care of the execution of the “ edict, and murdered them both *.” That we may judge of this, it is to be considered, that never was there a greater tyrant than *Antiochus*. He had entirely subverted the whole *Jewish* constitution, abolished the antient laws, and massacred the people. If ever there was a just foundation for rising up in defence of religion, law and liberty, here was an occasion that loudly called for it. In these circumstances *Matthias*, who was not a mere private person, but a ruler, and a great and honourable man in the city of *Modin* where he dwelt, slew a *Jew*, who was then openly committing a crime, for which by the fundamental laws of his country he ought to have suffered death, but at a time when no legal justice in the usual forms could be had. He also killed the King’s officer, who was then compelling the people to subvert the laws. This


LETTER XIII. he designed as a signal to the insurrection which he immediately begun, an insurrection fully justifiable if ever any was so, and which was carried on with a noble spirit and fortitude, and with a success that ended in the subversion of the horrid tyranny, and the happy restoration of their liberties and laws. Such an action, so circumstanced as that of *Matthias*, if it had been performed by a *Greek* or *Roman*, in opposition to horrid bare-fac'd tyranny and cruelty, and in vindication of the essential laws and liberties of his country, would have been highly celebrated, and transmitted to all succeeding ages as a most glorious act of heroism.

The only thing farther that I shall mention is what he observes concerning “ the massacre
“ which the *Levites* made of three thousand
“ men in one day, when they were commanded,
“ without any other form of proceeding, to
“ take every man his sword, and to slay his
“ neighbour*.” This must be owned to be an extraordinary punishment, and the occasion was extraordinary. The revolt of the people was the most inexcusable, by this writer's own acknowledgement, that could be supposed. It happened, when the law had been just promulgated with the most amazing solemnity, and the constitution established, to which they had given their own consent. The body of the people had thereby exposed themselves to destruction. And if they had been consumed in an imme-

* Vol. V. p. 146.

diate way by a plague, or fire, or some extraordinary judgment from heaven, it was no more than they deserved. It was necessary that so open, so public, so aggravated a revolt, and insurrection against the majesty and authority of the supreme universal Lord, to whom they themselves had so lately in the most solemn manner vowed subjection and obedience, should be distinguished with marks of great severity. In cases of crimes where great numbers have been concerned, it has sometimes been thought just to decimate them, to make one in ten suffer the death they all deserved. But here of above six hundred thousand three thousand only suffered, not above the two hundredth part of the whole. The numbers that were concerned rendered the trying each of them in a formal process, which is what he seems to require, impracticable. Nor was there any need of it. The fact was public and notorious: And the persons that suffered were undoubtedly such as were known to be most guilty, and to have been most active in promoting the defection and revolt. And the immediate punishment of these was the most speedy way of quelling the insurrection, and bringing the whole body to a sense of their guilt and of their duty.

The third objection I proposed to take notice of as raised by this writer against the *Mosaic* œconomy is this. That “the first principles, and the whole tenor of the *Jewish* laws, took that people out of all moral obligations

LETTER
XIII.


LETTER
XIII.

“ ligations to the rest of mankind—That they
 “ were taught to think themselves a chosen
 “ race distinct from the rest of mankind, and
 “ who were far from owing to other men, what
 “ other men owed to them, and to one ano-
 “ ther. This produced a legal injustice and
 “ cruelty in their whole conduct, authorized
 “ by their law, and pressed upon them by their
 “ priests and prophets *.” And he elsewhere
 observes, that “ the first principle of their po-
 “ lity, ecclesiastical and civil, was insociability:
 “ And accordingly their manners were rendered
 “ unsuitable to the common nature and genius
 “ of mankind †.”

This is a heavy charge, but if closely ex-
 amined, this insociability amounteth to no more
 than this. That they had not a community of
 religion and rites with the heathens, as the hea-
 thens had with one another, and which they
 could not have without absolutely destroying,
 and defeating the end of their most excellent
 constitution: That they were not to intermarry
 with idolaters, and were obliged to keep close
 to the observation of their own peculiar laws
 and customs; several of which were designed
 to preserve them as a distinct body from mixing
 and incorporating with other nations. And
 considering how different their constitution was
 from that which obtained in other countries:
 That all the world about them was immersed in

* Vol. III. p. 290. See also *ib.* p. 283. † Vol. V. p. 148.
 See also *ib.* p. 198.

idolatry

idolatry and polytheism, and that they themselves were very apt to fall in with the idolatrous customs of the neighbouring nations, and to which mankind in all ages have been very prone: Considering these things, if great care had not been taken to keep them distinct by several peculiar rites and customs, and to hinder them from intermarrying with their idolatrous neighbours, they could not possibly have preserved their constitution: They must have been soon mixed and confounded with other nations: The consequence of which would have been, that they would have fallen into a conformity to their religion and worship, and have lost their own. And so the whole design of that admirable polity, so well fitted to preserve the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and of him only, in opposition to the universally prevailing polytheism and idolatry, would have been defeated: And all nations would have been involved in the same common idolatry, and perhaps have continued in it to this day. For, according to the plan laid by the divine wisdom, *Judaism* prepared the way for Christianity: And all that is good in *Mahometanism* is derived from the one or the other of these. But though the people of *Israel* were obliged thus to keep themselves distinct, and though none were regarded as strictly and properly incorporated into their body, who did not conform to the peculiar laws of their polity, they were not obliged to confine their benevolence to those
or

LETTER XIII. of their own nation. They were directed by many express precepts in their law to shew great kindness to those of other nations, to the strangers that passed through their land, or that sojourned among them: To exercise great humanity towards them, and serve them in all friendly offices: This is not only allowed, but strongly pressed upon them in their law, as any one will be convinced, that impartially considers the passages referred to at the bottom of the page*. And the *Jews* themselves observe that the precepts prescribing a kind conduct towards strangers, are inculcated one and twenty times in the law.


It is mere calumny and abuse to say, that the *Jews* were authorized by their law, and pressed by their prophets, to exercise cruelty and injustice towards the rest of mankind; and that they were absolved from all moral obligations, and from all rules of justice, equity, and fidelity with regard to them. Nor was there any thing in their law to oblige them to persecute others for their opinions in religion, or to compel them to conform to their peculiar rites. On the contrary, they allowed those of any other nation to dwell among them, and to worship at the temple where there was a court provided for them, who worshipped the one true God the maker and preserver of all things, though they did not observe the rites which were pe-

* Lev. xix. 24. xxv. 35. Numb. xxvi. 11. Deut. x. 17, 18, 19. xxiv. 19, 20, 21, 22.

cularly prescribed to those of their own body. LETTER
XIII.
And how happy would it have been, if the principles of toleration had been always carried thus far among those of other professions!

Their looking upon themselves to be God's chosen people, ought to have engaged them to great thankfulness to God for such eminent advantages, and to have put them upon distinguishing themselves by the pure practice of religion and every virtue, that they might walk worthy of their character and privileges: If they abused this to pride and insolence, the fault was not in their law, but in themselves. Mankind have been always too prone to abuse their real or supposed advantages. The *Greeks* regarded the rest of the world as *barbarians*. And *Socrates* is introduced by *Plato* in his fifth book of laws, as directing the *Greeks* to regard the *barbarians* as *by nature* their *enemies*, and as prescribing a conduct towards them, which is little reconcilable to the common rules of humanity. Christians cannot but look upon it as their great advantage that they are distinguished from many other nations which are sunk in the grossest ignorance and barbarism. And it would argue the most inexcusable stupidity and ingratitude, not to be very thankful to providence on this account. But this is no just reason for treating those nations with contempt and cruelty.

The fourth objection which was mentioned was, that there are several passages in the Scriptures, which are false, absurd, and unphilosophical.

LETTER
XIII.  phical. And he particularly instances in the account there given of the creation of the world, and the fall of man.

With respect to the former, he says, "It is impossible to read what *Moses* writ on that subject, without feeling contempt for him as a philosopher, and horror as a divine. For he is to be considered under both these characters ||." And he takes upon him to pronounce, that "we cannot admit *Moses's* testimony concerning the beginning of the world for divine, without absurdity and blasphemy *."

There cannot in my opinion be a greater instance of the most unreasonable prejudice, than the objections that have been raised against the authority of *Moses* from the account he gives of the creation. Whosoever will take the pains impartially to compare it with the accounts left us in the traditions of the most antient nations, concerning which the reader may see the introduction to the *Universal History*, relating to the *Cosmogony, or the creation of the world*, will find the account given by *Moses* so vastly superior, as will naturally lead him to regard it as of an higher original. There is a majesty and sublimity, as well as simplicity and plainness in it, which hath greatly recommended it to the best judges. Nothing could be so proper to answer the design he had in view, as to begin his book with an account of the creation of the

world. If he had merely asserted in general, LETTER
XIII. that God created the world, and all things that are therein, this would not have made such an impression upon the people, as was proper and necessary in a matter of such vast importance, and which, according to the author's own observation, " leads to the acknowledgement of " the Supreme Being, by a proof levelled to " the meanest understanding ||." And therefore it was proper to give them more distinct notions of the formation of things by the divine power and wisdom. Accordingly he distinctly mentions the light, the firmament, the sun, the moon, and stars, the earth, the sea, the mountains, the plants and vegetable products of the earth, the various kinds of animals, and lastly, man himself. And assures them, that these various appearances were not owing to a variety of causes, which, according to Lord *Bolingbroke*, the first men in the rude uncultivated ages would be naturally led to believe, but were all owing to one and the same glorious original cause and author. It is evident, that what was principally designed was to give an account of the formation of our system, as far as relates particularly to our earth: At the same time assuring them, that the sun, moon, and stars, all the heavenly bodies, which the nations were apt to adore, were created by God. The whole is represented as having been effected with an Almighty facility. That God only spoke or com-

A View of the DEISTICAL Writers.

LETTER
XII.

manded, and it was done. All things were created by the word of his power, which tends to give a noble idea of the power and majesty of the great Creator. Yet this great work, according to *Moses*, was carried on in an orderly progressive way. There is a general account given of the visible and successive changes wrought each day upon the face of the earth, till it was completed. But our author who is determined on every supposition to find fault with the *Mosaic* account, blames *Moses* for representing the solar system, or even this our planet, as having been the work of six days. He thinks "such precipitation seems repugnant to that general order of nature, which God established, and which he observes in his productions||." As if the first formation of things must necessarily have been carried on in the slow way, which is now observed after the order and course of nature is once established. It is perfectly agreeable to reason to believe, that the first formation of the world, and the several species of things in it, did not take up a long space of time: And yet there is no reason to think that it was all perfected in an instant, without any intervals, though it would have been easy to the divine power to have done so. And this writer, who seems here to think the creation as represented by *Moses* to have been too much precipitated, and accomplished in too short a time, seems elsewhere to think that it was too

slowly carried on. For he says, “ we must not
 “ conceive the world to have been made by a
 “ laborious progression——God willed it to
 “ exist, and it existed *.”

LETTER
 XIII.

As to the particular order in which the crea-
 tion was carried on according to the account
 given by *Moses* ; this writer with all his con-
 fidence has not been able to prove that there is
 any thing in it inconsistent with reason or with
 true philosophy : Though he has passed a severe
 censure on those who have endeavoured to “ re-
 “ concile the *Mosaic* account to reason and na-
 “ ture, and to wrest natural philosophy into an
 “ agreement with it †.” He instances in *Moses’s*
 saying, that “ light was created, and the distin-
 “ ction of night and day, of evening and morn-
 “ ing was made, before the sun, the moon, and
 “ the stars ‡.” But we know so little of the
 real nature of light, that no man can pretend
 positively to determine that it could not have
 made its appearance before the sun and moon
 and planets were completed in their present
 form and order. As it seems to be the noblest
 substance in the material world, it is reasonable
 to believe that at the first formation of things, it
 was first created, or at least separated from the
 chaotic mass, and put in motion, so as to make
 a distinction between light and darkness, and
 some kind of succession and vicissitude of the
 one and the other, answering to day and night,
 evening and morning : Though it is evident

* Vol. IV. p. 111. † *Ib.* p. 181. ‡ Vol. III p. 301.

LETTER
XIII.

from the account given of the work of the fourth day, that it was not till then that the sun, moon, and stars were rendered conspicuous to the earth, and the order and course of things fully settled, so as to cause the proper distinction of times and seasons, days, months, years; for which reason no notice is taken of the formation of those heavenly bodies till that day. It is to little purpose to say, as his Lordship has done, that "*Moses*" was as ignorant of the true system of the universe as any of the people of his age." This is more than he can prove. But if it were so, it was not necessary, supposing him inspired as a prophet or a law-giver, that he should be inspired also with a knowledge of the true system of philosophy and astronomy. Or, if he had been ever so well acquainted with it, it would have been altogether improper to have given an exactly philosophical account of the creation: Nor could any such account of it have been given, considering the different systems of philosophy that have obtained, but what would have been as much found fault with, and perhaps more, than that which he has given. The truth is, such an account would have been no way accommodated to the capacities of the people: It would have perplexed and confounded instead of instructing them. It was proper for many reasons that the account should be drawn up in a popular way, and yet in a way that is at the bottom agreeable to the real truth of things. So the moon is very fitly called a *great light*, and
it

it may be truly called so, because it yields great light to us, though strictly and philosophically speaking it has no light of its own at all. And now after all our improvements in philosophy and astronomy, we still speak of the light of the moon, of the sun's motion, rising and setting — And the man that in a moral or theological, or in an historical discourse, would use a different language, would only render himself ridiculous.

Lord *Bolingbroke* farther objects, that though *Moses* ascribes the creation to God, “ yet when “ God proceeds to the creation of man, he calls “ in other beings to co-operate with him, and “ make man in his and their image. This seems “ to lay a foundation for polytheism, which is “ inconsistent with that unity of God which my “ reason shews me, and which the general tenor “ even of the *Mosaic* history attests*.” And since by his own acknowledgement the general tenor of the *Mosaic* writings leads us to assert the unity of God, this plainly shews that the passage he refers to was not designed to infer polytheism. And if there be something unusual in the manner of expression, it must be interpreted in a consistency with the whole *Mosaic* law; nor can it be supposed that *Moses* intended it otherwise. And this plainly appears from the very passage itself considered in its connection. For after having told us, *Gen. i. Ver. 26.* that *God said, Let us make man in our image, after*

* Vol. III. p. 300.

LETTER XIII. *our likeness*: He adds, Ver. 27. *And God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him*: Where it is plain, that what is expressed plurally in one verse is singular in the other: And that the design of those expressions, *Let us make man in our image*, was not to signify that other beings joined with God in the formation of man, and in making him in their as well as God's image; since it is expressly declared in the words immediately following, that *God created man in his own image*, and for the greater emphasis, and as it were on purpose to prevent such a construction, it is again repeated, *in the image of God created he him*. I would observe by the way, how much nobler the account is, that is given by *Moses* of the formation of man, than that which was given by the ancient *Egyptians*, of whose wisdom and philosophy our author speaks in such high terms, and from whom he would have us believe *Moses* derived all his wisdom and knowledge. They taught, as he observes from *Diodorus Siculus*, that "the first of human kind were quickened into life by the sun, and were animated systems of mud." And he thinks, that "if we are persuaded that this world had a beginning in time, we must of necessity assume, that the first man and the first woman, or that one man and one woman at least, were produced in full strength and vigour of body and mind†." This is agreeable to the *Mo-*

† Vol. V. p. 107, 108.

saic account, which is perfectly consistent with LETTER
XIII. reason, though there is no great likelihood, that reason alone could have assured us of it. For as his Lordship there observes, “how men came into the world, reason will tell us no better than history or tradition does.” This therefore is a proper subject of divine revelation.

It argues a strange disposition to find fault, to lay such a stress as Lord *Bolingbroke* has done, upon that particular manner of expression *Moses* makes use of, that God *rested the seventh day from all his work*, as if it were alone sufficient to destroy the authority of the *Mosaic* writings. No man that impartially considers the noble account there given of the creation, that God is represented as having only spoke and it was done, can reasonably imagine that the design of those expressions was to signify that God was *wearied with the laborious work of creation*, as our author expresses it, and needed rest after it, as men do, who are tired with their work. *Hast thou not known, saith the Prophet Isaiah, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? Isaiah xl. 28.* All therefore that can be understood by that manner of expression is only this, that God had then finished the work of the creation, and had a divine complacency in it.

As to the *Mosaic* account of the fall of man, it is what his Lordship has frequently endeavoured to expose. And it has been a constant subject

ETTER subject of ridicule to the Deistical Writers in
 XIII. every age. But if it be candidly and impartially
 examined, as it stands connected with the account given by *Moses* of man's original dignity, it will appear to be of great importance, and to furnish instructions of excellent use.

The account given by *Moses* of the state in which man was at first created is short, but such as tends to give a noble idea of his dignity; as having been created in the image of God, in a state of purity and innocence, and invested with a dominion over all the other creatures in this lower world. His Lordship in a passage cited above says, that "supposing the world to have
 " had a beginning in time, we must of neces-
 " sity assume, that the first man and the first
 " woman, or that one man and one woman at
 " least, were produced in full strength and vi-
 " gour of body and mind." And indeed man cannot reasonably be supposed to have been at first created in a state of infancy, for then he must soon have perished. He was therefore formed in a state of maturity, as were the other animals, and undoubtedly in a sound and happy constitution of body, and it is equally reasonable to suppose that he was created in an answerable perfection of mind. And that consequently there was in man at his first creation, a perfect harmony and just balance in the several faculties of his nature, that his intellectual and moral powers were sound and clear, and uncorrupt, his appetites and passions in a state of just sub-
 jection

jection to reason and the law of the mind, and his affections rightly disposed. Here then is a state of moral rectitude, in which according to all the dictates of reason and good sense man must be supposed to have been created. Nor can any thing be more absurd, than to suppose that this noble creature, who was constituted lord of this inferior creation, the crown and ornament of God's works here below, made his first appearance in the world, as a huge overgrown infant, in full vigour indeed and beauty of body, but a mere child in understanding, and with a soul utterly unfurnished. It is reasonable to believe, that he that made him would not turn him out into the world absolutely destitute of knowledge and ideas, but that he immediately endued him with so much knowledge of things, especially of his Maker, of the creation of the world, and of his duty, as qualified him for answering the ends of his being. *Moses* informs us, that great things were done for him by the beneficent Creator. That he was pleased in his great goodness to provide a peculiarly delightful seat for the entertainment of his innocent creature, a blissful paradise, where he was placed amidst a profusion of joys. And as there was none among the inferior animals, that were put under his dominion, with whom he could cultivate that society and friendship for which his nature was formed, it pleased God to make another creature of his own kind, bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, adorned with all the charms

of

LETTER
XIII.

LETTER XIII. of beauty and innocence, to whom he was to be united in the dearest ties of love. And from them was to proceed a race of creatures of the same species.

In this state man was undoubtedly obliged by the law of his creation to obey and adore his Creator and Sovereign Lord and Benefactor, and to yield a ready obedience to all his known commands. But though universal obedience was his duty, *Moses* acquaints us that there was a particular command given him by way of trial. Nor was there any thing in this unbecoming the Supreme Wisdom and Goodness. Since God was pleased to constitute him lord of this inferior creation, and had given him so large a grant, and so many advantages, it was manifestly proper in the nature of things, that he should require some particular instance of homage and fealty, to put him in mind, that he was under the dominion of an higher Lord, on whom he depended, and to whom he owed an unre-served subjection. And what properer instance could there be in the circumstances man was then in, than his being obliged in obedience to the divine command to abstain from one or more of the delicious fruits of paradise? It pleased God to insist only upon his abstaining from one, at the same time that he indulged him a full liberty as to all the rest. And this served both as an act of homage to the Supreme Lord, from whose bountiful grant he held paradise, and all its enjoyments, and it was also fitted to teach him a noble and useful lesson
of

of abstinence and self-denial, one of the most important blessings in a state of probation, and also of unreserved submission to God's authority and will, and an implicit resignation to his sovereign wisdom and goodness. It tended to habituate him to keep his sensitive appetite in a perfect subjection to the law of reason, in which consists the proper order and harmony of the human nature, and to take him off from too close an attachment to sensible good, and also to keep his desire after knowledge within just bounds, so as to be content with knowing what is good and useful, and not to pry with an unwarrantable curiosity into things that it did not belong to him to know.

Moses farther informs us, that our first parents transgressed the command given them for the trial of their obedience, by eating the forbidden fruit. How they came to do this, when they were created innocent and upright, may seem strange, and really is so. But the same objection might have been made with regard to the first sin, or transgression of the divine law, whenever it happened, whether among men or angels. For, except we suppose them to have been created actually depraved, or under a necessity of sinning, which would be to make God himself the author of sin, they must have been formed in a state of purity and rectitude, and capable of keeping the law of God which was given them as the rule of their obedience. And then the difficulty would recur, how came they to fall and disobey, when they might so easily have stood and continued

LETTER
XIII.

LETTER XIII. continued in their obedience? All that can be said is, that man though created upright, and without any wrong affections or dispositions, yet was a free agent, and therefore had it in his power to disobey. The account given by *Moses* of the first sin is very short. There were probably several circumstances attending it, which we are not informed of. But from what is said of it, we may gather that the tempter, who, by the consent of the *Jewish* and *Christian* church, was an evil spirit making use of the serpent as an instrument, endeavoured both to work upon the sensitive appetite, and upon that desire of knowledge and pre-eminence so natural to the human mind, and which is of great advantage when kept within proper bounds. He might probably pretend, that the tree had an hidden excellent virtue in it, of which he might plead his own experience as a proof: And that therefore they had some way misunderstood the command, or at least God would not be severe upon them if they transgressed it. If they had exercised their thinking powers, as they might and ought to have done, they might easily have seen through these specious illusions. But this they neglected, and were inexcusable in doing so: Since they ought not to have hearkened to any pretences or insinuations whatsoever against an express divine command, so plainly given, and which was particularly designed as a trial of their obedience, and was so easy to be observed. Their disobeying in such circumstances was in effect an attempt
to

to throw off the allegiance they owed to God, an insurrection against his sovereign authority, and an arraigning his governing wisdom, and the basest ingratitude to his infinite goodness, which had placed them in such a noble and happy station, and had heaped so many favours and benefits upon them. And now they had nothing but dismal prospects before them. There was an unhappy change in the face of things. They were expelled out of paradise. The earth lost much of its beauty and fertility: And they became subject to many pains, diseases, and death. Yet God did not utterly cast them off. He gave them tokens of his readiness to receive them to his grace and favour upon their sincere repentance. And by the original promise, the true nature and design of which was probably more distinctly explained to our first parents than is mentioned in that short account, he gave them to understand, that he would not leave them to perish without remedy under the curse and misery brought upon them by means of the tempter; and that he would raise up for them a glorious Deliverer who was to proceed from the woman's seed, and to rescue them from the miseries and ruin, to which they had exposed themselves by their sin and apostasy. And there is reason to think, that they had hopes given them, that though they were still to be subject to many evils, and to temporal death as the effects and punishments of sin, yet upon their repentance, and sincere, tho' imperfect obedience, they

LETTER they were to be raised to a better life. And
 XIII. accordingly the hopes of pardoning mercy, and
 the expectation of a future life, seem to have
 obtained from the beginning, and to have spread
 generally among mankind, and made a part of
 the primitive religion derived from the first pa-
 rents and ancestors of the human race.

I have laid these things together, that we may
 the better form a judgment concerning the *Mo-
 saic* account. The sum of it is this. That man
 was originally created pure and upright, con-
 stituted soon after his creation in a happy para-
 dise, and admitted to many tokens of the divine
 love and favour: But that he fell from that state
 by sinning against God, and violating the com-
 mand given him as a test of his obedience:
 And that he thereby brought death and misery
 into the world with all the penal evils to which
 the human nature is now obnoxious. And these
 are excellent instructions. What can be more
 agreeable to right reason, or have a better effect,
 when really believed, than that God made man
 at first upright and happy, in a state of moral
 rectitude: That sin which was owing to his wil-
 ful defection from God, was the source of all
 the evils to which the human nature is now ex-
 posed, and which therefore are not chargeable
 on God, or on his original constitution, but on
 man himself: That mankind are now in a laps-
 ed state, but not forsaken of God, who hath
 in his great goodness provided a proper remedy,
 and hath been pleased to assure them of his rea-
 diness

diness to receive them to his grace and favour, and to accept and reward their repentance and sincere obedience. LETTER
XIII.

And now upon this view of things it will be no hard matter to answer the objections which Lord *Bolingbroke* hath urged against the *Mosaic* account of the fall.

He represents it as absurd to suppose, that
 “ this moral system was destroyed by the wiles
 “ of a serpent, and by the eating of an apple,
 “ almost as soon as it began, against the inten-
 “ tion as well as command of the creator *.”
 As to the command given to our first parents to abstain from the fruit of a particular tree, at the same time that they had a full grant made to them of all the other delicious fruits of paradise, it had nothing in it inconsistent with the divine goodness; and it hath been shewn, that in the circumstances man was then in, it was a command very proper to be given; and the transgressing this command at the solicitations of any tempter whatsoever was an inexcusable act of disobedience: That this sin was committed against the *intention as well as command of the Creator*, is very true, if by its being against his intention be understood that it was what he did not encourage or approve; though it was what he foresaw, and thought fit in his wise providence to permit. He urges indeed, that “ God
 “ might have prevented man’s fall by a little
 “ less indulgence to what is called free-will †.”

* Vol. III. p. 301.

† *Ibid.*

LETTER
XIII.

And he elsewhere mentions “ the severity with
 “ which God punished our first parents for a
 “ fault which he foreknew they would commit
 “ when he abandoned their free-will to the
 “ temptation of committing it *.” This, if
 it proved any thing, would prove that it is un-
 just in God ever to punish any man for any sin
 at all: For whenever men sin, it may be said
 that he leaves them to their own free-will, and
 that it is what he foreknew. No doubt God
 might by an exertion of his absolute omnipo-
 tency have hindered our first parents from sin-
 ning; and he might have hindered either men or
 angels from ever sinning at all. But we see,
 that in fact he chuses, as a moral governor, to
 deal with men as moral agents, and leaves them
 to the liberty of their own wills. And in the
 case here referred to man had full power to have
 stood, and to have resisted the temptation; and
 his not so doing was his own fault, and not
 owing to any defect of goodness in God. He
 himself furnishes a proper answer to his own ob-
 jection, when he observes, that “ it may be truly
 “ said, that God when he gave us our reason,
 “ left us to our free-will, to make a proper or
 “ improper use of it; so that we are obliged to
 “ our Creator for a certain rule and sufficient
 “ means of arriving at happiness, and have
 “ none to blame but ourselves when we fail of
 “ it †.” And to the same purpose he saith, that
 “ God has given to his human creatures the

* Vol. V. p. 321.

† *Ib.* p. 388.

“ mate-

“ materials of physical and moral happiness, and
“ has given them faculties and powers to collect
“ and apply these materials.---What we shall do
“ for ourselves, he has left to the freedom of
“ our elections *.”

He urges, that “ the doctrine of two inde-
“ pendent principles, the one good, the other
“ evil, is not so absurd as the doctrine of an
“ inferior dependent being, who is assumed to
“ be the author of all evil; and that to affirm,
“ that a God sovereignly good, suffers an infe-
“ rior dependent being to deface his work in
“ any sort, and to make his other creatures both
“ criminal and miserable, is still more injurious
“ to the Supreme Being †.” And again he re-
“ peats it, that “ it is inconsistent with the good-
“ ness and wisdom of God, to suffer an inferior
“ being, his creature, and a creature in actual
“ rebellion, to baffle his designs ‡.” And if
he suffered this evil being to compel them to be
criminal and miserable, it would be so. But
not, if he suffered him only to tempt and to
seduce, and at the same time made them every
way able to withstand the temptation, and pro-
vided them with sufficient means to that pur-
pose; which was the case of our first parents.
God had done all that was proper for him to do
as a moral governor to prevent the defection.
He had formed them in a state of moral recti-
tude, and endued them with good dispositions.

* Vol. V. p. 474.

† Vol. IV. p. 20.

‡ Vol. V. p. 321.

LETTER
XIII.

The creation was fresh about them, and the glorious evidences of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness! They knew that he was the Author of their beings, and that from him flowed all the blessings they enjoyed. He had given them the most express injunction in the plainest terms, and strongly enforced, to prevent their disobedience. I see not therefore why God should exert his own omnipotency to hinder Satan from tempting them, since he could only tempt, but not compel: And they were sufficiently armed and provided against every temptation that could befall them, if they would but use the strength and advantages they had; which, all things considered, were superior to those that any of their posterity have been since possessed of.


His Lordship takes notice of “the severity which had been exercised on the whole race of mankind, who share in the punishment, though not in the crime*.” And again he charges the divines for supposing “that all mankind were punished for the sin of one †.” That mankind are now subject to the evils *Moses* mentions as the consequence of the fall, barrenness of the ground, pains and sickness in child-bearing, diseases and death, is undeniable. The only difference between the *Mosaic* account, and that of those who ridicule it, is that they suppose all these evils to be the necessary effects of the original constitution and ap-

* Vol. V. p. 321.

† *Ib.* p. 485.—See also *Ib.* p. 284.

pointment of God at the first formation of man LETTER
XIII.
and of the world; but *Moses* supposes the original constitution of things to have been much more happy; and that all these evils were brought into the world in consequence of man's voluntary defection from God. And which of these suppositions is most honourable to God, and most likely, if believed, to have a good effect upon the minds of men, may be left to any impartial and thinking person to determine. And it seems very odd, that it should be represented as unjust in God to lay those evils upon men in consequence of the sin of our first parents, which they might easily have avoided, when it is accounted no reflection upon the justice and goodness of God to lay those evils upon men by the original constitution, without any regard to sin, either of their first parents, or their own.

On supposition that *Adam* and *Eve* were the fountains and protoplasts of the human race, it seems evident that their posterity must suffer under the consequences of their defection. If they were banished from Paradise, and it was just they should be so, their posterity could not expect to be continued in it. If their natures became tainted, and subject to diseases and death, they could only convey tainted and mortal natures to their offspring. It cannot be denied, that in the ordinary course of providence, children often suffer evils that were originally owing to the crimes of their parents and an-

LETTER XIII.  **ceptors.** Wicked parents often by their bad conduct forfeit advantages for their children as well as themselves; and not only propagate distempered bodies to them, but considering the great influence that the bodily crasis and temperament hath upon the dispositions of the mind, they are frequently instrumental in conveying bodily constitutions, which incline them to vicious affections and disorderly passions, though they do not bring them under an absolute necessity of sinning, or imitating their father's vices; since it is appointed that mankind should be propagated in a way of successive generation, it is evident that children must in many cases be greatly dependent on their parents, and derive great blessings or evils from them. And this may on many accounts be supposed to hold much more strongly with respect to the first parents of the human race, than any others.

As to the exceptions our author makes against some particular expressions made use of, and circumstances related, in the *Mosaic* account of the fall, they are no other than what have been frequently repeated and answered. Dr. *Tindal* had urged the same objections, and several others, more distinctly, and with greater force; and I have considered them largely and particularly in my answer to that writer; to which therefore I beg leave to refer, having already insisted longer on this subject than I intended *. I would only farther observe, that some re-


* See answer to Christianity as old as the creation, Vol. II.

markable traces of the primitive paradisaical state^{LETTER XIII.} of man, and a fall from that state, are observable in the traditions of the antient sages, in different parts of the world. And there is great reason to think, that at the time when *Moses* writ, those traditions were more distinctly known. Lord *Bolingbroke* pronounces the account of the fall to be a *moral, philosophical Egyptian allegory*, designed to account for the introduction of evil *. And if he had looked upon it in that light, he had no right to urge the literal sense of it as an objection against the authority of the *Mosaic* writings.

I proceed in the last place to consider what his Lordship has offered with regard to the sanctions of the law of *Moses*. He observes, that “ in the twenty eighth chapter of *Deuteronomy*, *Moses* on the renewal of the covenant between God and the people, employs no argument to induce the latter to a strict observation of it, of an higher nature than promises of immediate good, and threatenings of immediate evil. They are exhorted to keep the law, not for the sake of the law, nor for the sake of God, but for considerations of another kind, and where not only their wants were to be supplied, but all their appetites and passions to be gratified — their avarice, and all their other appetites and passions. God purchased, as it were, their obedience with this mercenary bargain †.” That we may judge of the con-

* Vol. V. p. 350.

† Vol. III. p. 291, 292.

LETTER XIII.  sistency of this writer, it is to be observed, that he himself, when speaking in high terms of the law of nature, as having sufficient proofs of a *divine sanction*, and a *divine original*, affirms the sanctions of that law to be *only temporal*, and that they are such as affect *nations collectively*, not *men individually*. And he proves these divine sanctions, as he calls them, to be sufficient, because such as these were the sanctions of the law of *Moses* *. He often insists upon it, that the only sanction of the natural law appointed by divine providence is this, that national virtue shall produce national happiness, and national vice shall produce national misery. If therefore national blessings were promised in the *Mosaic* constitution as rewards of their obedience, and national evils and calamities denounced as the punishments of their wickedness and disobedience, there was nothing in this, according to his scheme, but what was highly proper, and perfectly agreeable to the law of nature. Yet he thinks fit to represent it as a *mercenary bargain*; as if it was wrong to annex any sanctions at all to that law; for if any were annexed, they must upon his scheme of principles, be only of a temporal nature. As to what he observes, that “ the *Israelites* were exhorted to keep
 “ the law, not for the sake of the law, nor for the
 “ sake of God, but for considerations of another
 “ kind, in which all their appetites and passions,
 “ their ambition, avarice, &c. were to be grati-

* Vol. V. p. 90.

"fied." This is very unfairly represented. The blessings promised in the passage he refers to, *Deut.* xxviii. 1, 14. are indeed chiefly of a national kind. But there is no promise made to them of extensive conquest and universal empire; and it is evident, as I have elsewhere shewn *, that their constitution was not designed or fitted for it. If they obeyed the laws given them, they were to have fruitful and healthful seasons, to enjoy peace, plenty, and many blessings, in their own land. And it was promised them, that if they were invaded by their enemies, they should be protected against them, and prove victorious over them: That they should be happy and honourable above all other nations: And that God would establish them an holy people to himself, which included a promise of having their spiritual privileges continued to them, with the tokens of God's special favour and gracious presence among them, which was their happiness and their glory. Any one that impartially considers the *Mosaical* writings, will find, that the laws there given to the *Israelites* are enforced upon them by a great variety of important considerations. The excellency of the laws themselves is represented; as particularly *Deut.* iv. 6, 7, 8. And frequently is that short but comprehensive declaration subjoined to their laws, *I am the Lord, Jehovah*. They are urged to obedience by the consideration of God's sovereign authority and supreme dominion, of his

LETTER
XII.

* See answer to Morgan, Vol. I. p. 134, 135.

infinite

LETTER

XIII.



infinite righteousness and goodness, of the great things he had done for them, and the special relation he stood in towards them, by the gratitude they owed to him for all his benefits, by the hope of his favour, and fear of his displeasure. For they were taught that noble lesson, that in and from him alone they were to look for happiness, whether relating to the people in general, or to particular persons.

It may not be improper on this occasion to observe, that his Lordship has taken upon him to affirm, that “there cannot be any thing so im-
“piously interested and craving, as the senti-
“ments ascribed by *Moses* to the patriarchs.” And he instances “in *Jacob’s* vow, and the con-
“ditional engagement he took with God.” *Gen.* xxviii. 20, 21, 22. ‡ But to set this matter in a proper light, of which he has been pleased to make a most unjust representation, it must be considered, that immediately before the account which is given us of *Jacob’s* vow, we are informed of a vision he had when he was setting out upon his journey to *Padan-Aram*, in which God renewed the promises to him, which had been made to *Abraham* concerning the giving the land of *Canaan* to his posterity, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed: At the same time assuring him, that he would be with him in all places whither he went, and would bring him again into that land, ver. 12, 15. It was in

‡ Vol. III. p. 291, 292.

consequence of this vision that *Jacob* made his LETTER
XIII. vow the next morning; the design of which was to express the sense he had of the divine goodness, and his confidence in God's gracious protection; and to declare his solemn resolution, that if God would be with him, and keep him in his way, and would give him *bread to eat, and raiment to put on* [which shews the moderation of his desires] so that he should come again to his father's house in peace, he would after his return make an open public acknowledgement of his gratitude and devotion to the Lord as his God, set apart that place where God had appeared to him to his worship, and would devote the tenth of all the substance God should give him to his service. This instead of being *impiously interested and craving*, will appear to every person that judges candidly and impartially to be a great argument of the simplicity and goodness of *Jacob's* heart, and of a pious and well-disposed mind: Though undoubtedly it must appear absurd to our author, who does not believe that God concerneth himself with the individuals of the human race.

His Lordship frequently observes, that in the law of *Moses* there is no mention made of future rewards and punishments. He sometimes positively asserts, that *Moses* did not believe the immortality of the soul, nor the rewards and punishments of another life; for if he had, he would have taught it to that people; and that *Solomon* the wisest of their kings decides against it.

LETTER
XIII.

it *. But in other passages he insinuates, that *Moses* might possibly believe it himself, though he did not think proper to mention it to the people; and represents it as a most surprizing thing, that “ a doctrine so useful to all religions, “ and therefore incorporated into all the systems “ of Paganism, should be left wholly out of “ that of the *Jews* †.” And he endeavours to draw an argument from this against the divine original of this constitution. This is what he particularly urgeth in the conclusion of the twenty-first of his Fragments and Essays in his fifth volume, where he introduces it in a very pompous manner “ as an observation, which “ he does not remember to have seen or heard “ urged on one side, or anticipated on the “ other, and which, he thinks, evidently shews “ how absurd as well as improper it is to ascribe “ these *Mosaical* laws to God.” The observation is this: That “ neither the people of *Israel*, “ nor their legislator perhaps, knew any thing “ of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this life are to be punished.— Although he might have learned this doctrine, “ which was not so much a secret doctrine, as it “ may be presumed the unity of the supreme “ God was, among the *Egyptians*. Whether “ *Moses* had learned this among their schools, “ cannot be determined; but this may be advanced with assurance: If *Moses* knew that “ crimes, and therefore idolatry one of the

* Vol. III. p. 290.

† Vol. V. p. 238, 239.

“ greatest,

“ greatest, were to be punished in another life, LETTER
 “ he deceived the people in the covenant they XIII.
 “ made by his intervention with God. If he
 “ did not know it, I say it with horror, the
 “ consequence according to the hypothesis I
 “ oppose, must be, that God deceived both him
 “ and them. In either, a covenant or bargain
 “ was made, wherein the conditions of obe-
 “ dience and disobedience, were not fully, nor
 “ by consequence fairly stated. The *Israel-*
 “ *ites* had better things to hope, and worse to
 “ fear, than those that were expressed in it.
 “ And their whole history seems to shew how
 “ much need they had of these additional mo-
 “ tives to restrain them from polytheism and
 “ idolatry, and to answer the assumed purpose
 “ of divine providence *.” This is his boasted
 argument, and what seems mightily to recom-
 mend it to him, he looks upon it to be new,
 and what no man had insisted on before.

My first remark upon it is this: That he could not with any consistency urge the not making express mention of a future state, as an argument to prove that *it is absurd and impious to ascribe the Mosaical law to God*, since it appears from several parts of his book, that he himself did not believe the rewards and punishments of a future state. He ought rather upon his hypothesis to have conceived a high opinion of *Moses's* strict regard to truth, since he chose not to make use of a pious fraud, or of false

* Vol. V. p. 195.

LETTER

XIII.



and deceitful motives, when it would have been his interest, and for the advantage of his laws, to have done so. If it be said, that this is only urged as an argument *ad hominem*, which though false and inconclusive in itself, yet is conclusive upon the hypothesis of his adversaries, and proper to distress and embarrass them, they will perhaps find it no difficult matter to defend themselves against this dilemma. For if it should be allowed, that neither *Moses*, nor any of the people, had any assurance of a future state, it would not follow, that God in not revealing it deceived him or them. If indeed he had expressly told them, that the notion of a future state was false, and that they had no rewards or punishments to fear after this life is at an end, then supposing there were future rewards and punishments, this would have been a deceiving them in the strictest, properest sense. But merely not to reveal it to them, was not to deceive them. And whereas he urges, that on that supposition there was a covenant or bargain made, in which the conditions of obedience and disobedience were not fully, nor by consequence fairly stated; this proceeds upon the supposition, that if God made a covenant with them, he would not deal fairly, if he did not lay before them all the rewards and punishments of their obedience and disobedience; which certainly is a conclusion that cannot be justified. If God had only assured them in general, that if they kept his commandments, they should be

be intitled to his favour, and if they disobeyed they should feel the awful effects of his displeasure, this ought to have been enough to have engaged them: And it could not be said in that case that he dealt unfairly by them: Especially since he might have commanded their obedience, and demanded their subjection to his laws in a way of absolute authority, without any express stipulations on his part at all. Whatever particular promises or threatnings he added depended upon his sovereign good pleasure, and he might reveal those things in what measure or degree he in his wisdom should think fit. Our author himself has found out a reason for it, *viz.* that the doctrine of future rewards and punishments “was dressed up with so many fabulous circumstances among the *Egyptians*, that it was hard to teach or renew this doctrine in the minds of the *Israelites*, without giving an occasion the more to recal the polytheistical fables, and practice the idolatrous rites, they had learned during their captivity in *Egypt* &c.”

But let us put the other supposition, and which I take to be the true one, *viz.* that *Moses* and the *Israelites* did believe a future state of rewards and punishments. This writer himself frequently intimates, that it was believed among the *Egyptians*, and that it was not a part of the secret doctrine confined only to a few, but was spread and propagated among the vulgar. It

LETTER
XIII.

is therefore reasonable to believe that this doctrine obtained among the *Israelites* too, especially as by his own acknowledgement, it obtained among the *Babylonians*, and indeed among all the antient nations, as far as we have any accounts left us of their sentiments. And it cannot with the least probability be supposed, that the *Israelites* were the only people that were ignorant of it, and had no notion of that kind among them at all: Except we imagine that they were taught to believe the contrary; of which there is not the least proof: Nor is there any thing in the writings of *Moses* to contradict that notion. On the contrary, there are several things in those writings which by a fair construction imply it. Our author seems to think that the *Mosaical* account of the formation of man implies that his soul was a particle of the divinity †. There is no reason to suppose this. But it certainly leads us to acknowledge a remarkable distinction of the soul from the body: That it is a nobler substance, more nearly resembling the divinity, and not like the body formed of the dust of the ground. What *Moses* saith of God's gracious acceptance of *Abel's* sacrifice, who yet was murdered, and met with no reward of his piety, no good effects of God's acceptance of him, except we take in the consideration of a future state: The account he gives of the translation of *Enoch*, that he *walked with God*, and *that he was not, for God took him*, which

† Vol. IV. p. 480.

in the most natural construction implies the taking him out of this world to a better state: His representing the patriarchs, as calling this their present life the *few and evil days of their pilgrimage*, which shewed they ^{look} ~~wished~~ for a better country, that is an heavenly. To which may be added, the accounts there given of the appearances of angels, which naturally led the *Israelites* to acknowledge an invisible world of spirits. Nor can any instances be brought of any nations, who believed the existence of angels and separate intelligences, and yet did not believe the immortality of the soul, and a future state: The express declarations of *Solomon*, that the *righteous hath hope in his death*; the clear distinction he makes between the soul and body, that at death the latter shall *return to the earth as it was*, and the former, the *spirit, shall return to God that gave it*; and that there shall be a future account in which *every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil*: The assumption of *Elias* into heaven, which naturally led the thoughts of all that heard of it to another world, where good men shall be eminently rewarded: All these things, not to mention several passages in the *Psalms* and in the *Prophets* which plainly look this way, convince me that a future state was all along believed among that people*. And indeed it does not

* See this more fully proved in the Answer to Dr. Morgan, Vol. I. p. 39, et seq.

LETTER appear, that at the time of *Moses*, any man had
 XIII. arisen, as there did in the latter ages, who
 through the vain deceit and false refinements of
 philosophy denied it. As to the promises and
 threatenings addressed to the people of *Israel*
 as a collective body, of which kind those seem
 to be which are mentioned, *Levit. xxvi.* and
Deut. xxviii. these no doubt were directly and
 immediately of a temporal nature: And the
 striking representations that are there made of
 the consequences of their obedience or disobe-
 dience in this present world, seem very well
 fitted to make strong and vigorous impressions
 upon them, and to give them a lively sense of
 the constant interposition of divine providence.
 But besides this, the tenor of their law led them
 to think that the happiness of every individual
 person among them, and his interest in the fa-
 vour of God depended upon his obedience to
 the divine commands, and the practice of righ-
 teousness. This especially seems to have been
 the design of that general declaration in the law,
 that the man that did the precepts, there en-
 joined, should *live* by them. And there is no
 reason to think that they looked upon this as
 wholly confined to this present world. That
 it was understood to have a more extensive view
 may be reasonably concluded from what is said
 in the eighteenth chapter of *Ezekiel*, where the
 equity of the divine proceedings is vindicated,
 and where it is expressly declared with the greatest
 solemnity concerning every particular person
 that

that should forsake his evil ways, and turn to ^{LETTER} the practice of righteousness, that he should ^{XIII.} *not die*, but should surely *live*, *i. e.* be happy; and concerning every wicked and impenitent sinner, that he should surely die, *i. e.* be miserable; which must have its principal effect in a future state of rewards and punishments: Since even under that constitution it often happened that particular good men were exposed to many outward evils and calamities, and that bad men had great outward prosperity. What made it more necessary to insist explicitly and fully upon the doctrine of a future state in the Gospel, was, that through the corruption of mankind the antient belief of the immortality of the soul and a future state was very much obscured and defaced. As to the heathens there were many among those who made great pretensions to learning and philosophy that absolutely rejected it, and most of those who did not positively reject it, yet treated it as a thing doubtful and uncertain. And it had been so much blended with fables, that at last it seemed to have little hold even on vulgar opinion; as his Lordship observes in a passage cited above, p. 255, 256. To which it may be added, that there was at that time a considerable party even among the *Jews* themselves, considerable for their power and quality, though not for their numbers, who denied it. On all these accounts it became the divine wisdom to interpose by a more express revelation, containing clearer discoveries, and fuller proofs of it,

K k 2

than

LETTER than had been ever given to mankind before.

XIII. And this revelation was very properly brought by the most illustrious messenger that could be sent from heaven, the Son of God himself, that glorious and divine person whose coming had been so long promised and foretold. To which it may be added, that as the Gospel did not contain a system of laws immediately addressed to any particular nation as the *Mosaic* was, to none of the promises or threatenings there delivered relate directly and immediately to national blessings or calamities, but are such in which every individual of the human race should look upon himself as nearly interested.

Thus I have considered the principal objections advanced by Lord *Bolingbroke* against the holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, and especially against the *Mosaic* writings. There are some other objections interpersed, and which he rather briefly hints at than pursues, and which scarce deserve a distinct consideration. He thinks that a divine law ought always to have the effect. "Human laws may be eluded, and miss of the effect. But if God gives a law, it may be presumed, that effectual care should be taken to make that law observed; whereas there never was a law that less had the designed effect than that of *Moses*, from which the people were continually revolting *." This argument would hold equally against the law of nature, which he himself affirms to be the

* Vol. III. p. 393.

law of God, and yet owns that men have re-^{LETTER}
volved from it in all ages. But it has been shewn, ^{III}
that the law of *Moses* had actually a great effect,
and that by virtue of it the worship of the one
true God was maintained among the *Jews* in
a manner which eminently distinguished them
above the heathen nations: And that polity was
surprizingly preserved in all the revolutions of
their state till the coming of our Saviour, for
which it remarkably prepared the way, and thus
answered the ends the divine wisdom had in view
in instituting it.

He seems to blame *Moses* for not having taken
the proper measures to make his laws observed,
as *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* did afterwards. But if
the directions which *Moses* gave had been pur-
sued, never were there better and wiser precau-
tions taken to engage the people to make them-
selves acquainted with their law, and oblige
them to a careful observation of it. And all that
Ezra and *Nehemiah* did was to bring things
back as near as possible to the original institu-
tion and design. The signal calamities inflicted
upon the *Jews* in the time of the *Babylonish*
captivity, the greatest that had ever befallen them,
the utter desolation of their country, and their
having been so long banished from it, which ca-
lamities had been originally threatened in the
law itself, and were regarded by them as signal
punishments from heaven for their violation of
it: This, together with their wonderful re-
storation at the time that had been fixed for it

LETTER by the prophets, awakened in them a zeal against
 XIII. idolatry, and an attachment to their law, greater
 than ever they had shewn before.

He urges farther, that “ a divine law should
 “ have such a clearness and precision in its
 “ terms, that it may not be in the power of per-
 “ sons to elude and perplex the meaning of it.
 “ And that if it be not so, all that is said about
 “ marks of divinity in any law that pretends
 “ to be revealed by God, is mere cant*.” This
 is particularly intended against the law of *Moses*.
 And yet certain it is, that if the people fre-
 quently fell off into idolatrous practices, and
 perhaps endeavoured to reconcile these their
 practices with the worship of God as there pre-
 scribed, this could not be justly charged upon
 any want of precision in the terms of the law.
 For what can be clearer and more precise than
 the commands there given against polytheism
 and idolatry? Nothing can be more unreason-
 able, than what he sometimes insinuates, that
 if a revelation be given at all, it must be such as
 it should not be in the power of any man to
 misapprehend or misrepresent†. It may be of
 signal use to persons of honest and candid minds,
 though it be not absolutely incapable of being
 perverted and abused; which it could not be,
 if delivered in human language; except God
 should by an omnipotent energy, and by a con-
 stant miracle, over-rule all the passions, inclina-

* Vol. III. p. 292, 293. 296. † Vol. V. p. 545. Vol. IV.
 p. 261. 267.

tions, and prejudices of the human nature: The absurdity of which supposition, though it be what this writer seems sometimes to insist upon, I need not take pains to expose.

He thinks, "the Scriptures ought to be more perfect according to our ideas of human perfection, whether we consider them as books of law or of history, than any other books that are avowedly human *." I suppose he means that there should be greater elegance of composition, beauty of language, exactness of method, or that they should be more strictly philosophical. But perhaps what seems elegant to one nation would not appear so to another. The notions of elegance in style and composition were different among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, from what they were in the Eastern nations. And what might render the Scriptures more perfect in the eyes of some persons, might render them less perfect in other respects, and less fitted to answer the end for which they were designed. To talk of elegance of composition in human laws, or to blame acts of parliament for not being oratorical, would be thought a very odd objection. But it is the great excellency of the sacred writings, that there is in the different parts of Scripture what may please persons of all tastes. There is a simplicity and plainness accommodated to the vulgar: And yet there is in many passages a sublimity and majesty not

* Vol. III. p. 290.

LETTER to be equal'd, and which has gained the admiration of the ablest judges.

As to what he sometimes mentions concerning the multiplicity of copies, various readings, interpolations, I had occasion fully to consider these things in the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Use of History*, p. 65, *et seq.* and shall not repeat what is there offered. He has flirts here and there against some particular passages of Scripture, a distinct examination of which would carry me too far. And they are only such as Dr. *Tindal* had urged before him, and which have been considered and obviated in the answers that were made to that writer. See particularly *Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation*, Vol. II. Chap. XI, XII.



L E T T E R X I V .

The favourable representation made by Lord Bolingbroke of the excellent nature and design of the original Christian revelation. He gives up several of the Deistical objections, and even seems to acknowledge its divine original. Yet endeavours to expose its doctrines, and to invalidate its proofs and evidences. The law of Nature and Christianity not to be opposed to one another. The Gospel not a republication of the doctrine of Plato. The pretended opposition between the Gospel of Christ and that of St. Paul considered. This apostle vindicated against the censures and reproofs cast upon him. The miracles of Christianity, if really wrought, owned by Lord Bolingbroke to be a sufficient proof. The Gospels, by his own acknowledgement, give a just account of the discourses and actions of Jesus. Yet he has attempted to destroy their credit. His pretence, that it would be necessary to have the originals of the Gospels in our hands, or attested copies of those originals, examined. The several ways he takes to account for the propagation of Christianity shewn to be insufficient. What he offers concerning the little effect Christianity has had



in the reformation of mankind considered. Want of universality no argument against the divinity of the Christian revelation. Its being founded on faith not inconsistent with its being founded on rational evidence.

S I R,

I Now come according to the method I proposed to consider what relates to the Christian revelation strictly and properly so called, as it was taught by Christ and his apostles, and is contained in the sacred writings of the New Testament. Indeed whosoever carefully considers and compares the several parts of Lord *Bolingbroke's* scheme, must be sensible, that the whole of it may justly be regarded as an attempt against Christianity. If the principles he has laid down with regard to the moral attributes of God, divine providence, the immortality of the soul, and a future state, should take place, the Christian religion would be subverted at the very foundations. This is also the manifest intention of the account he gives of the law of nature. And one reason of the extreme virulence with which he hath attacked the law of *Moses* and the Scriptures of the Old Testament, seems to be the near connection there is between this and the religion of *Jesus*, which he represents to have been originally intended by our Saviour as a system of *Judaism*, and designed for no other

other nations but the *Jews* only *. But though all he hath offered against the Scriptures of the Old Testament may be regarded as designed to strike at the authority of the Christian revelation, yet there are some parts of his work, which appear to be more particularly intended for that purpose, which therefore it will be necessary to take a distinct notice of.

LETTER
XIV.

But first it will be proper to make some observations on several passages in his writings, in which he seems to make very remarkable concessions in favour of pure genuine Christianity as taught by our Saviour and his apostles in the New Testament, and to make an advantageous representation of its excellent nature and tendency.

After having observed, that some represent all religion founded on divine revelation as inconsistent with civil sovereignty, and erecting a private conscience that may and often is inconsistent with the public conscience of the state, and after inveighing against the spirit of *Judaism* and *Mahometanism*, he undertakes to defend Christianity against this objection — And asserts, that “no religion ever appeared in the world whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind.” See the fourth section of his fourth Essay †. He declares, that “no system can be more simple and plain than that

* Vol. IV. p. 305, 328, 350.

† Vol. IV. p. 281, 282.

LETTER " of natural religion as it stands in the Gospel *."
 XIV. And after having observed, that " besides na-
 " tural religion, there are two other parts into
 " which Christianity may be analysed---Duties
 " superadded to those of the former, and articles
 " of belief that reason neither could discover
 " nor can comprehend." He acknowledges, that
 " both the duties required to be practised, and
 " the propositions required to be believed, are
 " concisely and plainly enough expressed in the
 " original Gospel properly so called, which
 " Christ taught, and which his four Evangelists
 " recorded. But they have been alike cor-
 " rupted by theology †." Speaking of the
 Christian sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's
 Supper, he says, " No institutions can be ima-
 " gined more simple, nor more void of all
 " those pompous rites and theatrical representa-
 " tions, that abounded in the religious worship
 " of the Heathens and *Jews*, than these two
 " were in their origin. They were not only
 " innocent but profitable ceremonies, because
 " they were extremely proper to keep up
 " the spirit of true natural religion by keeping
 " up that of Christianity, and to promote the
 " observation of moral duties, by maintaining
 " a respect for the revelation which confirmed
 " them ‡." He declares, that " he will not
 " say, that the belief that *Jesus* was the Mes-
 " siah is the only article of belief necessary to
 " make men Christians. There are other

* Vol. IV. p. 290, 292. † *Ib.* p. 294. ‡ *Ib.* p. 301, 302.
 things

“ things doubtless contained in the revelation^{LETTER}
 “ he made of himself, dependent on and re-^{XIV.}
 “ lative to this article, without the belief of
 “ which, I suppose, our Christianity would be
 “ very defective. But this I say, that the system
 “ of religion which Christ published, and his
 “ Evangelists recorded, is a complete system to
 “ all the purposes of religion natural and re-
 “ vealed. It contains all the duties of the
 “ former, it enforces them by asserting the di-
 “ vine mission of the Publisher, who proved
 “ his assertions at the same time by his mira-
 “ cles; and it enforces the whole law of faith
 “ by promising rewards, and threatening pu-
 “ nishments, which he declares he will distri-
 “ bute when he comes to judge the world *.”
 And he afterwards repeats it, that “ Christianity
 “ as it stands in the Gospel contains not only a
 “ complete but a very plain system of religion.
 “ It is in truth the system of natural religion,
 “ and such it might have continued to the un-
 “ speakable advantage of mankind, if it had
 “ been propagated with the same simplicity
 “ with which it was originally taught by Christ
 “ himself †.” He says, that “ supposing Chri-
 “ stianity to have been an human invention, it
 “ had been the most amiable and the most use-
 “ ful invention that was ever imposed on man-
 “ kind for their good. — And that Christianity
 “ as it came out of the hands of God, if I may
 “ use the expression, was a most simple and

* Vol. IV. p. 314.

† *Id.* p. 316.

“ intelligible

LETTER
XIV.

“ intelligible rule of belief, worship, and man-
 “ ners, which is the true notion of a religion.
 “ As soon as men presumed to add any thing of
 “ their own to it, the human alloy corrupted
 “ the divine mass, and it became an object of
 “ vain, intricate, and contentious science*.”
 “ After having observed, that “ the political
 “ views of *Constantine* in the establishment of
 “ Christianity, were to attach the subjects of
 “ the empire more firmly to himself and his
 “ successors, and the several nations which com-
 “ posed it to one another, by the bonds of
 “ a religion common to all of them; to soften
 “ the ferocity of the armies; to reform the li-
 “ centiousness of the provinces; and by in-
 “ fusing a spirit of moderation, and submission
 “ to government, to extinguish those principles
 “ of avarice and ambition, of injustice and
 “ violence, by which so many factions were
 “ formed, and the peace of the empire so often
 “ and so fatally broken:” He declares, that
 “ no religion was ever so well proportioned,
 “ nor so well directed, as that of Christianity
 “ seemed to be, to all these purposes.” He
 “ adds, that “ it had no tendency to inspire that
 “ love of the country, nor that zeal for the
 “ glory and grandeur of it, which glowed in
 “ the heart of every *Roman* citizen in the time
 “ of the commonwealth: But it recommended
 “ what *Constantine* liked better, benevolence,
 “ patience, humility, and all the softer vir-

* Vol. IV. p. 394, 395.

“ tues *.” He alloweth, that “ the Gospel is
 “ in all cases one continued lesson of the
 “ strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence,
 “ and of universal charity.” He mentions
 “ Christ’s blaming his disciples for being wil-
 “ ling to call for fire from heaven against the
 “ *Samaritans*.—And that the miracles wrought
 “ by him in the mild and beneficent spirit of
 “ Christianity, tended to the good of man-
 “ kind †.” He observes, that “ the theology
 “ contained in the Gospel lies in a narrow com-
 “ pass. It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain,
 “ and it is employed throughout to enforce na-
 “ tural religion ‡.” After having said, that
 “ the articles of faith have furnished matter of
 “ contention in, as well as from, the apostolical
 “ age, and have added a motive to that cruel
 “ principle, which was never known till Chri-
 “ stians introduced it into the world, to perse-
 “ cution even for opinions;” he adds, that
 “ the charge which the enemies of religion
 “ bring against Christianity on this account is
 “ unjustly brought. These effects have not
 “ been caused by the Gospel, but by the system
 “ raised upon it, not by the revelations of God,
 “ but by the inventions of men ||.” He pro-
 “ fesses a great concern for true Christianity in op-
 “ position to theology, and says, that “ genuine
 “ Christianity was taught of God §.” And
 not to multiply passages to this purpose, he pro-

* Vol. IV. p. 433. † *Ib.* p. 188, 189. ‡ *Ib.* p. 261.
 || *Ib.* p. 313. § *Ib.* p. 349.—See also Vol. III. p. 339.

LETTER nounces, that “ the Christian system of faith and
 XIV. “ practice was revealed by God himself, and it
 “ is absurd and impious to assert, that the divine
 “ *Logos* revealed it incompletely or imperfectly.
 “ Its simplicity and plainness shewed, that it
 “ was designed to be the religion of mankind,
 “ and manifested likewise the divinity of its
 “ original.”

I have chosen to lay together these several passages relating to Christianity in one view. And if we were to look no farther, we should certainly entertain a very favourable opinion of Lord *Bolingbroke's* sentiments with regard to the truth, the excellency, and divine original, of the Gospel of *Jesus*.

I shall here subjoin some reflections which have occurred to me in reviewing these passages, and others of the like import, which are to be found in his Lordship's writings.

The first reflection is this, That there must certainly be a wonderful beauty and excellency in the religion of *Jesus*, considered in its original purity and simplicity, which could force such acknowledgements from a person so strongly prejudiced against it, as his Lordship appears to have been. According to the representation he himself has been pleased to make of it, it was a *most amiable* and *most useful* institution, whose natural tendency was directed to *promote the peace and happiness of mankind*. It contains *all the duties of natural religion*, and teaches

them in the most plain and simple manner. It is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity; and tends to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, which have done so much mischief in the world, and disturbed the peace and order of society. As its moral precepts are excellent, so its positive institutions are not only innocent but profitable, and extremely proper to keep up the spirit of religion. He acknowledges, that considered in its original simplicity, it was a most simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship, and practice: That the theology contained in the Gospel is marvellous, but plain: And that the system of religion there taught is a complete system, to all the purposes of religion natural and revealed, and might have continued so to the unspeakable advantage of mankind, if it had been propagated with the same simplicity with which it was taught by Christ himself. I think it plainly follows from this representation of the nature and tendency of the Christian religion as taught by our Saviour and his apostles, that those can in no sense be regarded as real friends to mankind, who do what they can to subvert its authority, and thereby destroy its influence on the minds of men, and who by artful insinuations, or even open attempts, endeavour to bring true original Christianity into contempt; as it will appear this writer, notwithstanding all his fair professions, hath done.

LETTER
XIV.

Another reflection that may be made on Lord Bolingbroke's concessions is this: That he has in effect given up several objections which have been urged by the Deistical Writers, and on which great stress has been laid, and has acknowledged them to be of no force against the religion of *Jesus* as laid down in the Gospel. It has been pretended, that Christianity, or revealed religion, is not friendly to civil sovereignty, or government; but he treats those that make this objection, if designed against Christianity as revealed in the Gospel, and not merely against the duties that have been superadded to it, as *falling below notice, and scarce deserving an answer**: And praises the policy of *Constantine* in endeavouring to establish Christianity as the religion of the empire, as being the best fitted of all religions to promote the public peace and order, to reform licentiousness, to curb factions, and to infuse a spirit of moderation, and submission to government. See the passages cited above from Vol. IV. p. 282, 433.

Again, Christianity and revealed religion hath been often objected against on account of its positive precepts, or institutions, added to the law of nature. But his Lordship thinks “ it
“ may be admitted, that things intirely and ex-
“ actly consistent with the law of our nature
“ may be superadded to it by the same divine au-
thority, and that positive precepts may be given
“ about things which are indifferent by the law

* Vol. IV. p. 300, 301.

“ of our nature, and which become obliga-
“ tory as soon as they are enjoined by such po-
“ sitive precepts *.” And particularly with re-
gard to the positive institutions of Christianity, or
the Christian sacraments as enjoined in the Gospel,
in their primitive simplicity, he acknowledges in
a passage above produced, that they were ex-
tremely proper to keep up the spirit of true re-
ligion, and to promote the observation of moral
duties †.

Another objection which hath been urged
against Christianity, is drawn from that spirit of
persecution which hath obtained amongst Chri-
stians on account of opinions in religion. But
he saith, that “ the charge which the enemies
“ of Christianity bring against it on this ac-
“ count is unjustly brought : That these effects
“ have not been caused by the Gospel, but by
“ the system raised upon it, not by the revela-
“ tions of God, but by the inventions of men.”
And he mentions Christ’s blaming his disciples
for being willing to call for fire from heaven
upon the *Samaritans*; and that all that he in-
structed his apostles to do, even in cases of the
most enormous crimes, was to separate sinners
from the communion of the faithful ‡.

There is no objection which hath been more
frequently urged against the Christian religion,
than its teaching doctrines or articles of belief,

* Vol. V. p. 547.
ib. p. 310, 311, 591.

† Vol. IV. p. 301. — See also
‡ Vol. IV. p. 188, 189, 313.

ETTER that reason neither could discover, nor can com-
 XIV.prehend. He asserts, that there are articles or
 doctrines of this kind in the Gospel; but that
 they are *concisely and plainly enough expressed
 in the original Gospel properly so called, which
 Christ taught, and which his four Evangelists
 recorded*; though they have been since *corrupted
 by theology* *.” And speaking of “reasonable
 “men who have received the Christian revela-
 “tion, for genuine, after a sufficient examina-
 “tion of the external and internal proofs;” he
 says, “Such men having found nothing that
 “makes it inconsistent with itself, nor that is
 “repugnant to any of the divine truths which
 “reason and the works of God demonstrate to
 “them, will never set up reason in contradic-
 “tion to it, on account of things plainly taught,
 “but incomprehensible as to their manner of
 “being. If they did, their reason would be
 “false and deceitful; they would cease to be
 “reasonable men †.” It is true, that he else-
 where saith, that “if the things contained in
 “any revelation be above reason, *i. e.* incom-
 “prehensible, I do not say in their manner of
 “being; for that alone would not make them
 “liable to objection, but in themselves, and
 “according to the terms in which they are
 “communicated, there is no criterion left by
 “which to judge whether they are agreeable or
 “repugnant to the religion of nature and of

* Vol. IV. p. 294.

† *Id.* p. 384. — See also p. 279.

“ reason. They are not therefore to be re-^{LETTER}
 “ ceived *.” But it is to be considered, that ^{XIV.}
 when divines talk of things above reason in the
 Christian system, all that they mean by it is,
 that they are things not contrary to reason, but
 as to the manner of them inconceivable: And
 according to his own concession, it can be no
 objection against the truth or divinity of reve-
 lation, that it containeth an account of some
 things which are *incomprehensible in their man-
 ner of being.*

Another reflection that is proper to be made
 upon what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath acknowledged
 with regard to the original Christian revelation
 as laid down in the Gospel of *Jesus* is, that he
 hath on several occasions seemed expressly and
 formally to own its divine original. In some of
 the passages above cited, he directly declares,
 that *genuine Christianity was taught by God* —
 That the *Christian system of faith and practice*
was revealed by God himself — And that the
first publisher of Christianity proved his asser-
tions by his miracles. To which I shall add an-
 other remarkable passage in the conclusion of
 his fourth Essay, which is *concerning authority*
in matters of religion. “ Christianity, saith he,
 “ genuine Christianity, is contained in the
 “ Gospel; it is the word of God: It requires
 “ therefore our veneration and strict conformity
 “ to it †.” He ought therefore, if he were

* Vol. V. p. 546.

† Vol. IV. p. 631, 632. —

See also *Ib.* p. 279. and Vol. III. p. 339.

LETTER consistent with himself, on the authority of that
 XIV, revelation, to receive what is there plainly revealed concerning the moral attributes of God, concerning divine providence as extending to the individuals of the human race, concerning Christ's being the great mediator between God and man, and concerning our redemption by his blood, and concerning a state of future rewards and punishments. And yet he hath endeavoured to subvert all these. Notwithstanding his professed regard for Christianity, he hath on several occasions used his utmost efforts to weaken or destroy the proofs of its divine original, to misrepresent and expose its doctrines and laws, those doctrines which he himself declares to have been original doctrines of the Christian religion. How far such a conduct is consistent with that truth and candor, that honesty and simplicity of heart, which becometh a sincere enquirer, and who declareth, that he hath nothing but truth in view, may be left to any fair and impartial person to determine.

In my reflections on this part of Lord *Bolingbroke's* works, the method I shall observe is this: I shall first consider those passages that seem designed to strike at the authority of Christianity in general; and then shall proceed to consider the objections he hath urged against some particular laws and doctrines of our holy religion.

With

With regard to Christianity in general, he ^{LETTER} runs a parallel, in the seventh and eighth of his ^{XIV.} Fragments and Essays, between the law of nature and Christianity. He compares the clearness and certainty of the former with that of the latter. He compares also their sanctions, and endeavours to shew, that the law of nature rests on fuller proofs than any that have been found, or can be given, of the divine institution of Christianity *. In all that he offers on this head, he goes upon the supposition of the absolute clearness and certainty of the law of nature to the whole human race; and what he has urged to this purpose has been considered in my ninth Letter. But it may be easily shewn, that the whole parallel he there draws between the law of nature and Christianity, and between the proofs of the former, and of the latter, is entirely impertinent. He himself there declares, that “ every friend to Christianity admits that the Christian law is nothing else than the law of nature confirmed by a new revelation, and that this is what the worst of its enemies does not deny, though he denies the reality of the revelation †.” It is not true, that the Christian law is nothing else than the law of nature: But that it comprehends it, that it clears and enforces it, is very true. It does not take off from any rational argument or evidence brought in favour of that law, and besides confirmeth it by an express divine testimony.

* Vol. V. p. 90, *et seq.*

† *Ib.* p. 93.

LETTER
XIV.

And must not common sense lead every man to acknowledge, that it must be a mighty advantage to have the law of nature thus farther cleared and confirmed? The proofs therefore of Christianity, and of the law of nature, are not to be opposed to one another. Both have a friendly harmony: And Christians have the great advantage of having both these proofs in conjunction. Christianity supposeth the law of nature, cleareth it where it was obscured, enforceth it by the strongest sanctions, and addeth things which could not be known merely by that law, and which yet it was of importance to mankind to be acquainted with. So that Christianity, as far as it relates to, and republishes the law of nature, has all the advantages which this writer ascribes to that law, because it is that very law more clearly published, and strongly confirmed: And in this respect there is no competition between them. And with respect to those things in Christianity which are not clearly comprehended in that law, and which we could not have discovered merely by our own unassisted reason, it is not to be wondered at if they are not so obvious to our understandings: But as far as they are necessary to be known by us they are revealed in the Gospel; and we are not obliged to believe them farther than they are there revealed. Nor shall those be condemned for not believing them, who have had no opportunity of being acquainted with that revelation. Though our author, in order to cast an
odium

odium on Christianity, after having observed, LETTER
XIV.
that “ the law of nature is universally given to
“ all mankind,” adds, that “ the greatest part
“ of the world are invincibly ignorant of the
“ first principles of Christianity, without the
“ knowlege of which, and without faith in
“ which, they are all condemned to eternal
“ punishment*.”

We have seen that our author declareth Christianity to be the law of nature enforced by a new revelation : So that according to this representation, it is a *divine republication of the law of nature*. Yet he elsewhere thinks proper to represent it as only a *republication of the doctrines of Plato*. And any one that considers the representation he hath frequently made of that philosopher and his doctrines, must be sensible that this is far from being designed as a compliment to the Christian revelation. Some account of his invectives against him was given in the fifth Letter. He calls him a *mad theologist*—And tells us, that *no man ever dreamed so wildly as Plato wrote*—And that he *introduced a false light into philosophy, and oftener led men out of the way of truth, than into it*. Yet he says, it is strange to observe “ the strange
“ conformity there is between *Platonism* and
“ *genuine Christianity* itself, such as it is
“ taught in the original Gospel. We need not
“ stand to compare them here. In general the
“ *Platonic* and Christian systems have a very

• Vol. V. p. 91.

LETTER

XIV.

“ near resemblance, *qualis decet esse sororum*,
 “ and several of the antient fathers and modern
 “ divines have endeavoured to make it appear
 “ still greater. — That this may give unbe-
 “ lievers occasion to say that if the doctrines
 “ are the same, they must have been deduced
 “ from the same principle; and to ask, what
 “ that principle was, whether reason or reve-
 “ lation? If the latter, *Plato* must have been
 “ illuminated by the Holy Ghost, and must
 “ have been the precursor of the Saviour, and
 “ of more importance than *St. John*. He an-
 “ ticipated the Gospel on so many principal ar-
 “ ticles of belief and practice, that unbelievers
 “ will say, it was a republication of the theo-
 “ logy of *Plato*: And that as the republication
 “ was by divine revelation, the publication must
 “ have been so too; And they will ask with a
 “ sneer, whether a man, whose passion for cour-
 “ tezans and handsome boys inspired him to
 “ write so many lewd verses, was likely to be
 “ inspired by the Holy Ghost*.” This is mean
 banter, taking advantage of the too great admi-
 ration some particular persons have expressed
 for *Plato*. But he has not traced the conformi-
 ty between *Platonism* and genuine original
 Christianity, under pretence that it was need-
 less. He owns, that *Plato blundered on some
 divine truths* †. That on some occasions he
 wrote like a very pious and rational theist and
 moralist; and that very elevated sentiments

* Vol. IV. p. 340.

† *Ib.* p. 348.

may be collected from his writings: That there is in them *a mixture of the brightest truths, and the foulest errors* *. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that there was in several instances a conformity between the doctrine of *Plato*, and that of the Gospel. But he himself acknowledges, that there were many things in his scheme contrary to that of Christianity. He says, that “some of *Plato*’s writings abound in notions that are agreeable to the Christian system, and in others that are repugnant to it †.” That “far from going about to destroy the Pagan superstition, he refined it, and made it more plausible, and more secure from the attacks to which it was exposed before ‡.” And that accordingly “*Platonism* answered the purposes of those who opposed Christianity ||.” I would only farther observe, that there is no writer whom he represents as so unintelligible as *Plato*; and yet he intimates, that if he had known and taught the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, “he who is so often unintelligible now would have been vastly more so, and less fitted for the great work of reforming mankind §.” This is a very odd insinuation from one who has acknowledged, that true original Christianity is a *plain and intelligible system of belief and practice*. And that its *simplicity and plainness shewed that it was de-*

* Vol. IV. p. 345, 352. † *Ib.* p. 344, 345. ‡ *Ib.* p. 355.
§ *Ib.* p. 359. § Vol. V. p. 226.

LETTER *signed to be the religion of mankind, and mani-*
 XIV. *fested likewise the divinity of its original.*

It may be looked upon as a farther proof of his regard to Christianity, that he represents it as an inconsistent scheme. He pretends, that the New Testament consisteth of two Gospels, the one published by our Saviour himself, and recorded by the evangelists, the other by St. *Paul*.

He observes, that “Christ was to outward appearance a *Jew*, and ordered his disciples to do what the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in *Moses’s* chair taught—And that when he commissioned his apostles to teach and baptize all nations, he only meant it of the *Jews* dispersed into all nations.”—He asserts, that “the mystery of God’s taking the Gentiles to be his people without subjecting them to circumcision, or the law of *Moses*, was inconsistent with the declarations and practice of *Jesus* *.” He asks therefore, “If this was the purpose of God to take the Gentiles to be his people under the Messiah, how came it that the Messiah himself gave no instructions about it to his apostles, when he sent them to preach his Gospel to all nations? Why was the revelation of this important mystery, so necessary at the first publication of the Gospel, reserved for St. *Paul*, who had been a persecutor? Shall we say, that this eternal purpose of the Father was un-

* Vol. IV. p. 305.

“ known

“ known to the Son? Or, that if it was known
“ to him, he neglected to communicate it to
“ the first preachers of the Gospel?” He seems
to think these questions unanswerable, and that
“ the *pertness* and *impudence* of the men that
“ pretend to account for these things, *deserves*
“ *no regard* *.” And yet it is no hard matter
to solve these difficulties. The calling of the
Gentiles was originally included in our Saviour’s
scheme. It was a remarkable part of the cha-
racter of the Messiah, clearly pointed out in the
prophetical writings, by many express predi-
ctions. Our Lord himself during his own per-
sonal ministry gave plain intimations of his de-
sign that way, and after his ascension into hea-
ven instructed his apostles in it by his spirit,
whom he sent to guide them into all truth.
And the gradual discovery of this in a way fitted
to remove their prejudices was conducted with
admirable wisdom as well as condescension.

Mr. *Chubb* had insisted on this objection at
great length. And I shall therefore refer to the
remarks made upon that writer in my former
volume, p. 360, 361. yet upon no better founda-
tion than this his Lordship hath taken upon him
to affirm, that “ the Gospel St. *Paul* preached was
“ contradictory to that of *Jesus Christ* :” And
that “ he taught several doctrines, which were
“ directly repugnant to the word and example
“ of the Messiah †.” And indeed our author
hath on many occasions discovered a particular

* Vol. IV. p. 326.

† *Ib.* p. 328.

LETTER XIV. prejudice against that great apostle. He calls him a *true cabbalistical architect* *, a loose paraphraiser and *cabbalistical commentator, as much at least as any antient or modern rabbi*. And that the different manner of his preaching the Gospel, and that of the other apostles, “marks “strongly the different schools in which they “had been educated, the school of Christ, and “the school of *Gamaliel* †.” But nothing is more evident to every one that reads the New Testament with attention than that there is a perfect harmony between *St. Paul* and the other apostles: And that the scheme of religion taught in the Gospels and in the Epistles is every-where the same. Such a harmony there is as shews they were all directed by the same spirit. The Gospel which *St. Paul* preached was what he received by revelation from *Jesus Christ*, as he himself declares, *Gal. i. 12*. He had not learned it in the school of *Gamaliel*. On the contrary, in that school he had imbibed the strongest prejudices against the religion of *Jesus*, and which nothing less than a power of evidence which he was not able to resist could overcome. He was very well versed in the *Jewish* learning; yet none of the apostles so frequently warned the Christian converts against the *Jewish* fables, or speaks with such contempt of their vain traditions, their endless genealogies, their strifes and questions about words, as he has done.

* Vpl. III. p. 288.

† B. p. 327, 328.

There are several invidious charges brought LETTER XIV. by our author against this excellent person. He is pleased to represent him as a *loose declaimer*, as a *vain-glorious boaster*, as having been guilty of *great hypocrisy and dissimulation* in his conduct towards the *Jewish* Christians, as writing *obscurely and unintelligibly*, and that where he is *intelligible*, he is *absurd, profane, and trifling* *. He particularly instances in his doctrine concerning predestination †. Though he owns, that “ this doctrine is very much softened, and “ the assumed proceedings of God towards men “ are brought almost within the bounds of credibility, by Mr. *Locke’s* exposition of the “ ninth chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*,” which he calls a *forced one*, but offers nothing to prove it so; and acknowledges, that *this sense might be admitted* ‡. He also charges him with teaching passive obedience, and as *employing religion to support good and bad governments alike* ||. Though any one that impartially considers the apostle’s doctrine in the passage he refers to, *viz.* the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*, will find it wise and excellent. Mr. *Chubb* had advanced the same charge, as well as most of the others that are produced by Lord *Bolingbroke* against that eminent apostle: And that I may not be guilty of needless repetitions, I shall refer to the remarks made on that

* Vol. III. p. 328, 330. 331.
Vol. V. p. 567. † *Ib.* p. 456.
516.

† *Ib.* p. 331, 509.
|| Vol. IV. p. 509,

LETTER WRITER in the former volume, p. 337, 338. 367,
 XIV. 368.

His Lordship mentions that passage, 1 Cor. vi. 5, 14. about women's prophesying with their heads uncovered, and that it is a shameful thing for men to wear long hair, which he says, is the *most intelligible trifling that we find in the Gospel*. This is very improperly brought in by the author here, where he proposes to shew that where St. Paul is not obscure he is *profane and trifling*. For this is generally acknowledged to be one of the obscurest passages in St. Paul's Epistles. But this is no real objection against their authority. Some obscure and difficult passages must be expected in the most excellent of antient writings, especially in things that have a special reference to the customs and usages of those times. He is pleased to say, that the *argument may not appear very conclusive, nor indeed very intelligible to us*: And if so, he has done wrong to produce it as an instance of intelligible trifling: But he sneeringly adds, that *it was both, he doubts not, to the Corinthians*. And I doubt not they understood it better than we at this distance can pretend to. He then mentions the apostle's directions to the *Corinthians* with regard to the prudent and orderly exercise of those spiritual gifts: And these directions cannot reasonably be turned to the disadvantage of the apostle, when they are undeniably wise and excellent.


His

His Lordship in his prejudice against *St. Paul*,<sup>LETTER
XIV.</sup> carrieth it so far as to pronounce, "That *St. Paul* received nothing immediately from "Christ:" Though he himself in the passage before referred to affirms, that he received the Gospel he preached, *not of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* He adds, that "*St. Paul* had no apostolical commission, except that which he assumes in the Acts of the Apostles, written by "*St. Luke*, and dictated probably by himself*." And again, that "he entered a volunteer into the apostleship, at least his extraordinary vocation was known to none but "himself." And if *St. Paul* dictated that account to *St. Luke*, it deserves the greatest credit, since he was the properest person in the world to give an account of it. But the truth of his apostolical commission did not depend merely upon his own word. It was made manifest by the most illustrious proofs and credentials, to which he could with confidence appeal†, and was acknowledged by the other apostles, though this writer is pleased to insinuate the contrary‡. Indeed the plain meaning of his whole charge here is, that *St. Paul* was an impostor, and that his call to the apostolical office was intirely his own fiction. But the great absurdity of this pretence has been so fully exposed in *Sir George Lyttleton's Observations on*

* Vol. IV. p. 388, 389.

† 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12.

‡ Gal. xi. 7, 8, 9.

LETTER *the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul,*
 XIV.  that it is perfectly needless to add any thing farther on that head. I shall only observe, that whosoever with a candid and unprejudiced mind considers the whole character and conduct of that great apostle, as represented in the Acts of the Apostles, and the temper and spirit which breathes in his admirable Epistles, will be apt to think that never was there among mere men a more perfect character than that of *St. Paul*. In him we may behold a shining example of the most exalted and unaffected piety towards God, the most fervent and active zeal for the divine glory; yet not a blind enthusiastic heat, but a zeal according to knowledge, and conducted with great prudence: The most extensive and disinterested charity and benevolence towards mankind, and the most earnest and affectionate concern for their salvation and happiness; the most steady fortitude and constancy under the severest trials and sufferings, which he endured with patience and even with joy, supported and animated by the earnest desire he had to serve the glorious cause of truth and righteousness, and by the sublime hopes of an everlasting reward in a better world for his faithful services in this. Never was there a truer greatness of mind than that which he manifested. And all this accompanied with a most amiable humility, and a great tenderness of spirit in bearing with the weaknesses and infirmities of others. He was a most glorious instrument in the hand of providence

vidence for promoting the sacred interests of pure and undefiled religion in the world. Our author says, that *Socrates* was the *apostle of the Gentiles in natural religion*, as *St. Paul* was in *revealed*. But no instance can be brought of any one person whom the former converted from the prevailing polytheism and idolatry. And how should this be expected, when he himself, as his Lordship owns, countenanced it by his own practice, and was *for the religion established by the laws* *. But the latter turned thousands in many different nations from darkness unto light, and from serving idols to serve the living and true God, and from the most abandoned vice and dissoluteness of manners to the practice of virtue and righteousness; which he performed in opposition to the seemingly most insuperable difficulties, and through a succession of the greatest labours and sufferings that any one man ever endured. This has always highly recommended him to the esteem and admiration of those who have a zeal for true original Christianity. And on the other hand, the enemies of our holy religion have always discovered a peculiar aversion to this excellent person, who was so successful an instrument in propagating it. And this seems to be the true reason of that obloquy and reproach which Lord *Bolingbroke* has been so industrious to fix on so admirable a character.

* Vol. IV. p. 193.

LETTER
XIV.

His real intentions towards Christianity will farther appear, if we consider the attempts he hath made to invalidate the proofs and evidences of it.

He frequently speaks with the utmost contempt of those that insist upon the internal characters of a divine original, which are to be observed in the revelation delivered in the holy Scriptures. By rejecting the internal characters he pretends to assert the authority of the Bible, and very gravely advises the divines to confine themselves to the external proofs, and to dwell very little on the internal characters, and represents them as talking a great deal of blasphemy on this head *. And yet he himself, as appears from some of the passages that have been above cited, has acknowledged several things with regard to Christianity as taught in the Gospels, which have been deservedly reckoned among the internal characters, which lead us to acknowledge that it came from God : Such as, the excellent tendency of its doctrines, precepts, and sacraments ; its being *one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of charity and universal benevolence ; its being a complete system to all the purposes of religion natural and revealed ; its plainness and simplicity, which, he says, shewed that it was designed to be the religion of mankind, and manifested likewise the divinity of its original.* It is true, that he charges those with *madness, and something*

* Vol. III. p. 271, 272.—Vol. IV. p. 229.

worse than madness, who in arguing concerning the internal characters, “pretend to comprehend “the whole œconomy of the divine wisdom from “*Adam* down to *Christ*, and even to the consum-
“mation of all things, and to connect all the dis-
“pensations.” And this is one part of his quarrel with *St. Paul*, whom, as well as the divines, he very unfairly represents as undertaking to *shew the sufficient reason of providence in every particular instance* from the beginning of the world to the end of it *. But however he is pleased to represent it, it is a noble contemplation, and highly for the honour of the sacred writings, that there we may observe one and the same glorious plan carried on by the divine wisdom and goodness from the beginning for the recovery and salvation of lapsed man: Successive revelations communicated at different times and in divers manners, and at the distance of several ages from one another, yet all subservient to the same glorious purposes, and mutually confirming and illustrating each other: The law and the prophets in their several ways conspiring to prepare the way for the revelation of *Jesus Christ*, and to furnish divine attestations to it. The religion carried on under the several dispensations still for substance the same; and whatever seeming variety there may be in the parts, an admirable harmony in the whole.

His Lordship speaking of what he calls the *internal proofs* of the Christian revelation, ob-

* Vol. III. p. 271, 272.—Vol. IV. p. 129.

LETTER
XIV.

serves, in a sneering way, that “the contents of
 “ the whole Christian system laid down in our
 “ Scriptures are objects of such a probability, as
 “ may force assent very reasonably in such a case,
 “ without doubt; although a concurrence of
 “ various circumstances, improved by the cre-
 “ dulity of some men, and the artifice of
 “ others, forced this assent in cases not very dis-
 “ similar*.” He has not thought fit to pro-
 duce an instance of a false revelation, whose
 evidence can be justly compared to that of
 Christianity. And as to his expression of *forcing*
assent by a *probability*, it is like many others of
 his, very improper. No Christian talks of
 forcing assent, nor would a forced belief have
 any great merit in it. But that there are suffi-
 cient grounds to make it reasonable to assent to
 it is very true. And this is what his Lordship
 ought to have acknowledged, if, as he himself
 confesses, “ it has all the proofs, which the
 “ manner in which it was revealed, and the
 “ nature of it, allowed it to have †.” This is
 in effect to own, that the proofs of Christianity
 are sufficient in their kind. And if this be the
 case, it is, according to the rule he himself has
 laid down, unreasonable to demand more. For
 he observes, that “ common sense requires that
 “ every thing proposed to the understanding,
 “ should be accompanied with such proofs as
 “ the nature of it can furnish. He who re-

* Vol. V. p. 93.

† *Ib.* p. 91.

“ quires

“quires more, is guilty of absurdity; he who
“requires less, of rashness *.”

LETTER
XIV.

With regard to the external proofs of Christianity, his Lordship does not, as several of the Deistical Writers have done, deny miracles to be proper or sufficient proofs. On the contrary, he sometimes affects to cry up the mighty efficacy of miracles, as alone sufficient, without any consideration of the goodness of the cause for which they were wrought, or examination of the doctrines they attest. And finds fault with “that maxim as contrary to common sense, “that is not for admitting miracles as proofs of “a divine original, without consideration of “the cause or doctrines: Since real miracles “can be operated by no power but that of “God, nor for any purpose by consequence, “but such as infinite wisdom and truth direct “and sanctify †.” Accordingly he declares, speaking of the Christian revelation, that “considering the glorious person by whom it was “brought, and the stupendous miracles that “were wrought to confirm it, we might be “ready to conclude, that it must have forced “conviction, and have taken away even a possibility of doubt ‡.” And he repeats it again, that “Christianity was confirmed by miracles, “and the proof was no doubt sufficient for the “conviction of all those who heard the publication of this doctrine, and saw the confirmation of it. One can only wonder that

* Vol. III. p. 246. † Vol. IV. p. 227, 228. ‡ *Ib.* p. 461.

LETTER " any such remained unconvinced *." His de-
 XIV.
 sign was undoubtedly to insinuate, that the miracles were not really wrought; because if they had been wrought they must have convinced all those that saw them. To talk of miracles as forcing conviction is to carry it to an unreasonable extreme, as any man must be sensible, that considers human nature, and the mighty influence of prejudices, passions, and worldly interests. We have however his concession, that miracles are sufficient for convincing those who saw them: And if so, they must be proportionably sufficient for the conviction of those who have a reasonable ground of assurance, that these miracles were really wrought, though they were not themselves eye-witnesses of them. The original proof of Christianity therefore was by his own account every way sufficient. The only question that remains is whether we have proper evidence to convince us that these miracles were actually performed. And of this we have evidence sufficient to satisfy every candid and impartial enquirer, and all that could be reasonably insisted upon in such a case. For the proof of this I shall refer to what has been already observed in my fourth Letter in answer to Mr. *Hume*.

The most remarkable of all the miracles by which the divine authority of the Christian religion is confirmed is the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*. And as to this, his Lordship observes,

* Vol. V. p. 91.

that " Christ scarce shewed himself to the few
 " who were said to have seen him after his resur-
 " rection in such a manner, as they could know
 " by it certainly that it was he whom they had
 " seen. I say the few, because *St. Paul*, who had
 " not probably ever seen *Jesus*, deserves no credit
 " when he affirms against the whole tenor of
 " the Gospels, that he and above five hundred
 " brethren at once had seen him after his resur-
 " rection." He has here plainly let us know,
 that after all his professed regard for Christianity,
 he is very willing to deny that which is the
 principal proof of our Saviour's divine mission,
 and to which he himself ultimately appealed as
 such. But we have nothing but confident asser-
 tions, after his Lordship's manner, and a bold
 charging *St. Paul* with a falshood without the
 least proof. For as to his pretence, that it is con-
 trary to the whole tenor of the Gospels, there
 is no foundation for it. The more to expose
St. Paul he represents it as if he had affirmed,
 that he himself was present, and saw *Jesus* at
 the same time that he was seen of five hundred
 brethren at once. Whereas he saith no such
 thing, but rather the contrary, 1 *Cor.* xv. 6, 8.
 But as to Christ's being seen by so many persons,
St. Paul speaks of it as a thing certainly known,
 and that the greater part of them were then
 alive when he wrote to the *Corinthians*. And
 the question is, whether *St. Paul* is to be be-
 lieved in a fact which he publicly affirmed in
 that

LETTER in that very age, and for the truth of which he
 XIV. appeals to great numbers of persons then living,
 or this writer who at the distance of 1700
 years, gives us his own word for it that there
 was no such thing? But I shall not need to add
 any thing farther on this subject here, having
 considered it so fully in the eleventh Letter of
 the former volume, which contains remarks on
the resurrection of Jesus considered.

The accounts of the extraordinary facts
 whereby Christianity was attested, as well as of
 its original doctrines, are transmitted to us in
 the sacred writings of the New Testament, par-
 ticularly in those of the Evangelists, and in the
 Acts of the Apostles. And it has been often
 shewn, that never were there any writings,
 which carry greater marks of purity, simplicity,
 and uncorrupted integrity, and of an impartial
 regard to truth, or which have been transmitted
 with a clearer and a more continued evidence.
 With regard to the writings of the Evangelists,
 Lord *Bolingbroke* hath himself acknowledged,
 that “ it is out of dispute, that we have in our
 “ hands the Gospels of *Matthew* and *John*,
 “ who give themselves out for eye and ear-wit-
 “ nesses of all that Christ did and taught. That
 “ two chancels were as sufficient as four to con-
 “ vey those doctrines to the world, and to pre-
 “ serve them in their original purity. The
 “ manner too in which these Evangelists re-
 “ corded them, was much better adapted to
 “ this purpose than that of *Plato*, or even of
 “ *Xenophon*,

“ *Xenophon*, to preserve the doctrines of So-
 “ *crates*. The Evangelists did not content
 “ themselves to give a general account of the
 “ doctrines of *Jesus Christ* in their own words,
 “ nor presume in feigned dialogues to make
 “ him deliver their opinions in his own name.
 “ —They recorded his doctrines in the very
 “ words in which he taught them, and they
 “ were careful to mention the several occasions
 “ on which he delivered them to his disciples or
 “ others. If therefore *Plato* and *Xenophon*
 “ tell us with a good degree of certainty what
 “ *Socrates* taught, the two Evangelists seem to
 “ tell us with much more what the Saviour
 “ taught and commanded them to teach*.”
 He finds fault indeed with *Erasmus* for
 making Christ to say to his disciples, in his pa-
 raphrase on the first chapter of the Acts, that
 “ the holy spirit would not only recal to their
 “ minds all he had taught them, but suggest
 “ likewise unto them whatever it might be ne-
 “ cessary for them to know.” And he adds,
 that “ cavillers will say, that these words were
 “ added by *Erasmus* to the text for reasons
 “ very obvious, and are not contained in the
 “ text.” But there is certainly very little ground
 for such a cavil, since it appears from the sacred
 text itself, that our Saviour did both promise to
 send his spirit to *bring all things to their re-*
membrance whatsoever he had said unto them :
 And also to *lead them into all truth*, and in-

LETTER
XIV.

* Vol. IV. p. 390.

LETTER
XIV. } struct them in things in which he himself had not fully instructed them during his personal ministry, because they were not then *able to bear* them, *John* xiv. 26. xvi. 12, 13, 14.

Notwithstanding the fair acknowledgement he had made of the credibility of the Gospels which are now in our hands, he hath thrown out several hints which are plainly designed to destroy the credit of them. Thus he talks of a multitude of different Gospels that were composed in the first ages, he thinks, *no less than forty*.— And asks, “ If the Gospels received into the “ canon are favourable to the orthodox belief, “ how do we know that the other Gospels “ were exactly conformable to these?” He talks, as Mr. *Hobbes* had done before him, as if “ the authenticity of the four Gospels depended “ on the council of *Laodicea*, which admitted “ four, and rejected the rest.” And adds, that “ every Church judged of the inspiration of “ authors, and of the divine authority of books ; “ and that those authors were deemed inspired, “ and those books were canonized, in which “ every particular Church found the greatest conformity with their own sentiments *.” But this is very unfairly represented. There is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that there was a general agreement in the Churches throughout the world, from the first age of Christianity, in receiving the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and St. *Paul’s* Epistles : That the spu-

* Vol. IV. p. 404, 405.

rious Gospels he speaks of were never generally ^{LETTER} received in the Christian Church as of divine ^{XIV.} authority: And that the primitive Christians were very careful and scrupulous not to receive any books into the sacred canon, but those of whose authenticity they had sufficient proofs. Nothing can be more absurd, and more contrary to plain undeniable fact, than to pretend that the sacred books of the New Testament were not looked upon as authentic and divine before the council of *Laodicea*, which was held not till after the middle of the fourth century. They were not first made so by that council, which only declared what had been long before received as of divine authority in the Christian Church. I need not say any more upon this subject in this place, but shall refer to the third Letter of the former Volume, which contains some account of *Toland's Amyntor*, and the answers that were made to it. To which may be added what I have offered in the *Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the study and use of History*, p. 102. *et seq.*

In order to weaken the credit of the original sacred records of the Christian religion, his Lordship hath farther observed, that “ in other
“ histories, if passages which we deem genuine
“ should be spurious, if others should be corrupted or interpolated, and if the authors
“ should have purposely or through deception
“ disguised the truth, or advanced untruth, no
“ great hurt could be done. But that in the

LETTER
XIV.

Scripture, besides all the other circumstances necessary to constitute historical probability, it is not enough that the tenor of facts and doctrines be true, the least error is of consequence." — He produces two instances to prove it, neither of which relate to any Scripture expressions at all. — And then he adds, that "when we meet with any record cited in history, we accept the historical proof, and content ourselves with it, of how many copies soever it be the copy. But this proof would not be admitted in judicature, as Mr. *Locke* observes, nor any thing less than an attested copy of the record. And he thinks, that if such a precaution be necessary in matters of private property, much more is it necessary that we receive nothing for the word of God, that is not sufficiently attested to be so." He takes notice of what the reverend Dr. *Conybeare*, now Lord Bishop of *Bristol*, has said in answer to this; of whom he speaks with a respect which is extremely just, but which, considering his usual manner of treating the Christian divines, could scarce have been expected from him towards one who had distinguished himself in defending the Christian cause. The answer of Dr. *Conybeare* which he refers to is this, "That the ground of this proceeding in civil causes, seems to be, that the original record, or an attested copy, is capable of being produced; and that therefore to offer any distant proof might look as if some

“ art were intended to corrupt matters, and to
 “ disguise the truth. But it is not in the nature
 “ of things possible to produce the originals or
 “ attested copies of the Scriptures.” This ap-
 peareth to me to be a good observation. But
 his Lordship is not satisfied with it. He answers,
 that “ the reason why the copy of a copy is re-
 “ fused in proof is not solely because the ori-
 “ ginal or an attested copy may be had, but be-
 “ cause the proof would be too distant whe-
 “ ther they could be had or no.”—And he
 thinks, “ if the rule be thought reasonable in
 “ the one case, it cannot be thought, without
 “ absurdity, unreasonable in the other. —
 “ However it happens, the want of an original
 “ or of an attested copy is a want of proof *.”
 But it is not the want of any proof that can be
 reasonably desired, or that is possible to be had,
 or that is necessary in any cases of the like kind.
 By the consent of all mankind, there may be
 sufficient evidence of the truth and authority of
 antient writings to convince any reasonable
 person, though neither the originals nor any at-
 tested copies of the originals be now remaining.
 And the man would only render himself ridi-
 culous that should reject them as unworthy of
 credit, and give no other reason for rejecting
 them, but the want of such originals or attested
 copies. And why should a condition be insisted
 on as necessary with regard to the Scriptures,
 which would be accounted absurd to the last

LETTER
XIV.

LETTER
XIV.

degree, if insisted on with regard to any other antient writings whatsoever? To which it may be added, that when great numbers of copies are taken from an original, and got into many hands, and dispersed into various parts, by comparing these copies there arises a stronger proof in the nature of things, to satisfy a reasonable person that those writings have not been materially corrupted or falsified, than if there were only one single copy remaining, though it should be attested by a living witness to have been faithfully copied and compared with the original; which yet by the author's acknowledgement would be sufficient in a court of judicature. It is manifest, that there would be more room to suspect a fraud or imposition in this case than in the other. As to what he alleges, that it is of much greater importance to guard against any mistakes in the word of God than in any thing that relates to matters of private property, and that therefore as great or even greater precautions are necessary with regard to the former than the latter, it must be acknowledged, that if the revelation were of such a nature, that it consisted in a single precise point, as often is the case of a deed to be produced in evidence in a court of judicature, where a single expression or clause may determine the whole, and gain or lose the cause, there might be some pretence for insisting on the strictest nicety of proofs, even as to all the several particular clauses and forms of expression, because a single mistake might be of the worst consequence, and defeat the

the design of the whole. But it is manifest this is not the case with regard to the revelation contained in the holy Scriptures. The doctrines there taught, the precepts there enjoined, the promises there made, the important facts there related, are so often repeated and referred to, and placed in such various lights, that nothing less than a general corruption, which could not have been effected, could defeat the design for which that revelation was given. If a particular passage was altered or interpolated, still there would be many others to preserve to us the substance of that revelation, and to prevent the wrong use that might be attempted to be made of such a passage. There is not therefore so scrupulous a nicety and exactness required in this case as in the other. The divine wisdom hath so ordered it, that the revelation was originally contained in several writings, published by different persons, and copies taken of them at different times, all confirming one another, and which render a general corruption of that revelation impracticable. The account of the facts there given is not confined to one book, nor are the articles of religion there mentioned, merely mentioned once for all, or drawn up in one form or system, but the facts are so often referred to, and the articles or doctrines so often repeated, and delivered on so many different occasions, that no mistakes in particular passages, or in a particular copy or copies, could destroy the intent or use of the original revelation.

LETTER

XIV.

It is with the same view of weakening and invalidating the evidence of Christianity, that his Lordship is pleased to observe what hath been often urged by others of the Deistical Writers before him, that “the external evidence of the Christian revelation is diminished by time.” This he represents as “so evident that no divines would be so ridiculous as to deny it*.” And after seeming to grant, in a passage cited above, that the proof of Christianity by miracles was sufficient for the conviction of all those who heard the publication of this doctrine, and saw the confirmation of it, he adds, that “this proof became in a little time traditional and historical: And we might be allowed to wonder how the effect of it continued and increased too, as the force of it diminished, if the reasons of this phenomenon were not obvious in history †.” As he has not thought fit to mention those reasons, no notice can be taken of them. But he ought not to have represented it as a thing which is universally acknowledged, that the external evidence of Christianity is diminished by time. The absurdity of that maxim, That the certainty and credibility of moral evidence is continually diminishing in proportion to the length of time, has been often exposed; particularly by Mr. *Dilston* in his Treatise on the resurrection, Part II. The evidence of Christianity hath in some respects increased, instead of being

* Vol IV. p. 267, 270.

† Vol. V. p. 91.

dimi-

diminished, since the first publication of it; especially the proofs arising from the wonderful propagation of the Gospel, contrary to all human appearance, notwithstanding the amazing difficulties it had to encounter with; and from the accomplishment of many remarkable predictions which they that lived in the first age of Christianity could not see the completion of *. To talk of the proof's becoming *traditional* and *historical* may pass with those that govern themselves by sounds, as if the words *traditional* and *historical*, and *doubtful* and *uncertain*, were terms of the same signification; when every one knows, that many facts come to us by tradition and history with such an evidence that no reasonable man can doubt of them any more than of what he hears or sees. He pronounceth indeed according to his manner with a decisive tone, that "it was not possible, that traditions derived from the first and through the most early ages of Christianity, should convey either facts or doctrines down with a due authenticity and precision unless a continued miracle had subsisted to alter the nature of things, and to produce effects repugnant to their causes †." This is very positively determined; but we have no proof of it but his own authority. And if it be understood not merely of facts or doctrines delivered down by moral tradition, which for the most part cannot

* This is fully shewn by Mr. Le Moine on Miracles, p. 252, 280.

† Vol. IV. p. 398.

LETTER

XIV.

be much depended upon, but of facts and doctrines contained in the sacred writings, there is no real foundation for this assertion. We have proof sufficient to convince any reasonable person, as I have elsewhere shewn*, that those writings were published in the first age of the Christian Church, whilst the apostles, and their immediate companions, the first publishers of Christianity, were yet alive. In which age if any had attempted to corrupt those writings in the accounts of doctrines and facts, such an attempt must have been unavoidably detected and exposed. And in the age immediately succeeding, those writings became so generally dispersed and known, so many copies of them were taken, and spread through different countries, they were had in such veneration among Christians, and so constantly read in their religious assemblies, that a general corruption of them would have been an impossible thing. Nor can any time be fixed upon from that age to this, in which such a general corruption of them could have been accomplished : And all attempts to prove such a corruption have been evidently vain and ridiculous, and have turned only to the confusion of those who have pretended it. As to what he urges about the false apostles and teachers in the first age, and their high pretensions to revelations and extraordinary gifts, and the many sects which were then formed ;

* See Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the study and use of History, p. 98, *et seq.*

and that though the apostles opposed them, "it ^{LETTER}
 " was often without effect, and always with ^{XIV}
 " great difficulty, as we may judge by that
 " which St. *Paul* had to maintain his authority
 " in the Church of *Corinth*, and others *."

This is so far from diminishing the original evidence of Christianity, that it rather confirms it. Since the evidence brought for the true Christian religion by the apostles and first publishers of it, must have been exceeding strong and cogent, and their authority, which had nothing but the force of truth, and the attestations given to their divine mission, to support it, must have been on a very solid basis, which was able to overcome all those complicated difficulties, arising from open enemies without, *Jews* and heathens, and from false brethren within, and the scandals and offences of the several sects which sprung up under various leaders, some of them persons of great parts and subtilty, and who put on very specious appearances. What strong proofs of a divine original, and what a mighty energy must have accompanied genuine primitive Christianity, by which it triumphed over all the apparently insuperable difficulties and oppositions of all kinds, which it had to encounter with, even at its first appearance.

The propagation and establishment of Christianity, taking it in all its circumstances, is indeed a most astonishing event, and has been always justly regarded as furnishing an argument of

* Vol. IV. p. 398.

LETTER great weight to prove its divine original, and
 XIV, the truth of the extraordinary facts and attestations by which it was confirmed. Lord *Bolingbroke* was sensible of this, and therefore has done what he could to take off the force of it, by endeavouring to account for the spreading of Christianity without any thing extraordinary or supernatural in the case. To this purpose he observes, that "indulgence to the *Jews* and to the Gentiles, " in order to gain both, was a fundamental principle of apostolical conduct from the first " preaching of the gospel: And that by such " prudent conduct the gospel was successively " propagated and converts flocked apace into " the pale of Christianity from these different " and opposite quarters *." He treats this, as if it were a piece of political conduct in *St. Paul* and the other apostles, in which they deviated from the original plan laid down by our Saviour himself. But this is a great mistake. The taking the *Jews* and Gentiles into the Christian Church, and uniting them both into one body, was part of the original plan of Christianity, which was evidently designed by the great author of our holy religion, in accomplishment of the glorious scheme formed by the divine wisdom from the beginning, and which had been clearly pointed out in the antient prophecies. But so far was the indulgence shewn to the Gentiles, and the incorporating them into the Christian Church along with the *Jews*,

* Vol. IV. p. 3 6.

from helping to bring the *Jews* into it, that it was one of the greatest obstacles to their entering into the pale of Christianity, and raised in them strong prejudices against it, which had so far possessed the minds even of the apostles, that it was with great difficulty, and by degrees, that they themselves were brought to embrace this part of the Christian scheme. Nor can it be supposed, that St. *Paul*, who had been educated in the school of *Gamaliel*, and in the strictest Pharisaical notions, for which he was extremely zealous, would of himself have ever formed such a scheme, in opposition to all his prejudices, if it had not been, as he himself affirms, communicated to him by a divine revelation, which came to him with an evidence that absolutely convinced him, and overpowered all his prejudices.

With regard to the Gentiles, the taking them into the Christian Church was only an admitting them into the body of those who professed the belief and acknowledgement of a crucified Saviour. And what was there in this to allure or engage them to forsake their antient religion, and those superstitions and idolatries, to which they were so strongly addicted? To tell the *Jews*, that they should form one Church with the Gentiles, whom they looked upon with disdain as utterly unworthy of such a privilege: And to tell the Gentiles, that they should form one Church with the *Jews*, for whose religion and nation, his Lordship observes, they had a

LETTER
XIV. *contempt and aversion*: And that they should with them be reckoned among the disciples of a crucified *Jesus*, i. e. of a *Jew* that had been put to a cruel and ignominious death by the heads of his own nation, and whom they were to acknowledge for their Saviour and their Lord; could this possibly have been an inducement either to *Jews* or Gentiles to embrace Christianity, which was so opposite to the prejudices of both, if it had not been for the conspicuous evidences of a divine attestation accompanying it?

Another way he takes of accounting for the propagation of Christianity is this: That “no ages nor countries could be more prepared to adopt every theological and metaphysical notion, even the most extravagant and least intelligible, than that wherein the Christian religion was first published and propagated *.” And he frequently intimates, that the heathen philosophy, especially the *Platonic*, had greatly helped forward the spreading of the Christian faith. If this had been the case, one would have expected, that the chief harvest of converts to Christianity, at its first appearance, would have been among the philosophers and metaphysicians, and those who were bred up in their schools. But it is evident the fact was otherwise. No persons were more generally averse to the Christian scheme, than the several sects of philosophers in the heathen world, who opposed it

* Vol. IV. p. 337.

with all the learning and subtilty they were masters of. And indeed it was in some of its fundamental principles, directly opposite to their favourite notions and prejudices. Nor could it be expected, that they who valued themselves so highly upon their learning, wisdom, and eloquence, would submit to be the disciples of a crucified *Jesus*, or learn their religion from such persons as the apostles were. The doctrine of salvation through Christ crucified, was *foolishness* to the proud *Greeks*, who pretended to seek *after wisdom*, and was not agreeable to any of their schemes. And so far was St. *Paul*, the most learned of the apostles, from blending the Pagan philosophy with the Christian system, which he preached, that he thought it necessary to warn the Christian converts against it. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit*, Col. xi. 8.


Another thing he mentions as having been a great advantage to the propagation of Christianity was, that “ great collections were made, “ and every church had a common purse. By “ these means they supported their poor; and “ every man who embraced Christianity being “ sure not to want bread, the Gospel was more “ effectually propagated, and great numbers of “ the lowest rank of people were brought into “ the pale *.” One would be apt to think by his representation, that the Christians were for taking in all the poor that offered themselves,

LETTER
XIV.

idle persons who only wanted to be maintained; in order to gain a number of converts and profelytes. But this is a very wrong representation. Every one knows, that great care was taken in the admitting persons into the Christian Church. They were to have a good assurance both of their faith and of their morals. No idle poor were to be supported. On the contrary, they were discountenanced, and were treated as persons that *walked disorderly*. It was a constitution established by apostolical authority as in the name of Christ, that if *any would not work, neither should he eat*; and that every man should *work with quietness, and eat his own bread*, and that he should *labour, working with his hands that which is good, that he might have to give to him that needeth*, 2 *Thess.* iii. 10, 11, 12. *Eph.* iv. 28. That spirit of charity and brotherly love which prevailed among the first Christians, was a noble effect of the Gospel of *Jesus*; and that which so opened their hearts and hands was the full conviction and persuasion they had of the truth and divinity of our holy religion. Thus *faith worked by love*. As to the reflections he makes upon their selling their possessions, and laying the money at the apostles feet, from whence he concludes, that *less than the whole would not satisfy the Church*, this and the case of *Ananias and Sapphira*, is considered in the remarks on *Chubb's* posthumous works in my former volume, p. 362, *et seq.*

to

to which I chuse to refer rather than be guilty of unnecessary repetitions.

LETTER
XV.


It is a topic often insisted upon by the Deistical Writers, that revealed religion, particularly the Christian revelation, has been of little or no advantage for promoting the reformation of mankind. Lord *Bolingbroke* seems to lay a particular stress upon this. He says, "It may be a full answer to all that Dr. *Clarke* had advanced against the heathen philosophers, and their being insufficient for the instruction and reformation of mankind, to ask, Whether that reformation, which the heathen philosophers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under the *Jewish* or Christian dispensation*?" What he saith concerning the effects of the *Jewish* dispensation hath been above considered; I shall here take notice of what he hath observed with regard to the effects of Christianity. He asserteth, that "the world hath not been effectually reformed, nor any one nation in it, by the promulgation of the Gospel, even where Christianity has flourished most †." And after mentioning the Christian martyrs and saints, of whom he frequently speaks with great contempt, he observes, that "as to holiness and austerities of life, that of particular men, or of some particular orders of men, will be far from proving the reformation of the world by Christianity; since there were formerly among the heathens,

* Vol. V. p. 256.

† *Ib.* p. 258.

"*Chal-*

LETTER
XIV.

“ *Chaldeans, Gymnosophists, and are now*
 “ among them and the *Mahometans*, instances
 “ of as great or greater austerities *.” But he
 has not fairly represented the argument brought
 to prove the reformation of the world by Christi-
 anity. In order to judge of this, it is necessary
 to consider the state of the world when Christi-
 anity first appeared. Not only were the nations
 universally involved in the grossest polytheism
 and idolatry, but never was there an age more
 immersed in vice, and all manner of wicked-
 ness. The picture *St. Paul* draws of it, *Rom.*
i. 21, 32. shocking as it seems to be, is a very
 just representation of the general state of the
 heathen world. But in proportion as the Gospel
 prevailed, many myriads were *turned from idols*
to serve the living and true God, brought from
 the most stupid idolatry to the pure adoration of
 the Deity, and from the most abominable vices
 to the practice of virtue and righteousness. He
 himself acknowledges, that “ our Saviour at his
 “ coming found the whole world in a state of
 “ error concerning the first principle of natural
 “ religion, *viz.* the unity and perfections of
 “ God, though not of absolute darkness; and
 “ that the spreading of Christianity has contri-
 “ buted to destroy *polytheism and idolatry* †.”
 And he observes, that “ *Eusebius* in the first
 “ book of his evangelical preparation, has given
 “ a long catalogue of absurd laws and customs,
 “ contradictory to the law of nature in all ages

* Vol. V. p. 261. et seq.

† Vol. IV. p. 243.

and

“ and countries, for a very good purpose, to
 “ shew in several instances, how such laws and
 “ customs as these have been reformed by the
 “ Gospel *.” He takes notice indeed of the
 faults there were among the first Christian con-
 verts, for which the apostle reproves them; but
 it is manifest from many passages of the New
 Testament, that wonderful was the reformation
 which was then wrought in the religion and
 manners of men †. The primitive Christians
 were, taking them generally, the most pious
 and virtuous body of men that ever appeared in
 the world. And though sometimes the antient
 Christian writers in the ardor of their zeal com-
 plain of the corruption and degeneracy that was
 growing among them, as *Cyprian* particularly
 has done, especially in his book *De lapsis*, whose
 testimony our author more than once refers to,
 yet it appeareth from many passages in their
 writings, that the body of the Christians was
 then remarkably distinguished by the purity of
 their lives and manners from the Pagans. One
 of the topics they constantly insist upon in their
 writings against the heathens, and in their apo-
 logies for Christianity, is the mighty change that
 is wrought in the lives and manners of those
 who embraced it. And though his Lordship
 banters *Lactantius* for the challenge he makes
 in a passage to which Dr. *Clarke* refers, yet this

LETTER
XIV.

* Vol. V. p. 100. † See 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.—Eph. iv. 18,
 24.—Gal. v. 24.—1 Thes. i. 3, 9, 10.—Col. i. 6.—1 Pet. iv.
 3, 4.

LETTER
XIV.

I think may be plainly concluded from it; that the good effects wrought by the Christian religion in reforming those who were converted to it, were so manifest, that their adversaries themselves were not able to deny it. And accordingly we have express testimonies of the Pagan writers to this purpose. That of *Pliny* is very remarkable, and well known. And even *Julian* notwithstanding all his prejudices, in his Epistle to *Arsacias*, recommends the purity and charity of the Christians, and of their priests, to the imitation of the Pagans, and represents it as one cause of the progress Christianity had made: Though no doubt they were then degenerated from what they had been in the first ages. As to the present state of the Christian world, his Lordship thinks, "it will not be said, that luxury and debauchery have been restrained by Christianity. Where is the court or city in which Christianity is professed, to which that phrase might not be applied, *Daphnicis moribus vivere?*" But there needs little observation to convince us, that the corruption and dissoluteness he speaks of is chiefly to be found among those who have little more of Christianity than the name, and who are in reality indifferent to all religion. And if the restraints of the Christian religion were removed, the corruption would certainly be much greater and more general than it is. Many thousands who would otherwise be very corrupt and dissolute, are engaged by the motives

tives and precepts of Christianity to lead a sober, LETTER
a righteous, and godly life. A real Christian XIV.
walking according to the rules of the Gospel,
and I doubt not that notwithstanding the corruption complained of, there are still great numbers of such, forms a far more complete and excellent character for virtue taken in its just extent, as comprehending rational piety and devotion, an extensive benevolence, and exemplary purity of manners, than is to be found among the most admired Pagans. And indeed Christians are taught to keep themselves pure from several practices which the heathens scarce looked upon to be any crimes at all. As to what he mentions of the *cruel wars, persecutions, and massacres*, among Christians, he himself acknowledges, that *no part of this ought to be ascribed to the Gospel*, nor can be *reconciled to the principles of it**. The most effectual way therefore of promoting real piety, virtue, and charity, would be to endeavour to engage men to a closer adherence to the doctrines, and laws of Christianity, and instead of setting them loose from its sacred restraints, to enforce its important motives upon their hearts and consciences.

I need not take any particular notice of what his Lordship hath offered against the Christian revelation drawn from its not having been universally published in all nations and ages †. The chief force of what he hath urged depends upon this supposition, that according to the Gospel, all

* Vol. V. p. 264.
former volume, p. 30, 35.

† Concerning this objection see the

LETTER those shall be damned, that do not believe in
 XIV. Christ, whether ever they heard of him or not,
 ~~~~~ damned, as he expresses it, *even in their involuntary ignorance*\*; which is expressly contrary to the tenor of St. Paul's reasoning in the second chapter of the Epistle to the *Romans*. The declarations made in the Gospel of the necessity of believing in Christ, and the punishment of those who do not believe, plainly relate to those who have an opportunity of being acquainted with the Christian revelation. I shall only farther observe, that whereas it has been often urged by the advocates for Christianity, that it appears from the analogy of the divine procedure, that God may in a consistence with his wisdom and goodness, grant to some men and some nations much greater helps and means for knowledge and moral improvement than to others, our author hath no way of avoiding this, but by boldly asserting, in contradiction to manifest fact and experience, that all men have the *same means*†; which is a-kin to another extraordinary assertion of his, that *there never was a time when it could be justly said, that the law of nature was imperfectly known*‡. Tho' he himself frequently represents the greater part of mankind as having been ignorant for many ages together of what he owns to be the great fundamental principle of that law. And it is to be observed, that after having said in the passage just now referred to, that all men have the

\* Vol. V. p. 295.    † *Ib.* p. 294.    ‡ *Ib.* p. 202.




*same means*, he soon after declares, that “ they <sup>LETTER</sup> shall be accountable for no more than they <sup>XIV.</sup> had capacities or means of knowing:” Which plainly supposes that they all have not the same means and advantages, but that there will not be as much required of those who had less advantages, as of those who had greater; which the friends of the Christian revelation will readily allow.

I shall conclude this Letter with mentioning a passage which is undoubtedly intended by the author to expose Christianity. He observes, that “ natural law is founded in reason; but “ Christianity is founded in faith; and faith “ proceeds from grace; and whether a man “ shall have grace or no, depends not on him\*.” This is a way of talking usual with those who laugh both at faith and grace. His Lordship is pleased on some other occasions to make mention of divine grace; but always in a way of ridicule. The notion of divine assistance has nothing in it but what is agreeable to reason, and to the sentiments of some of the best and wisest men in all ages. And he himself, even where he treats it as a vain and groundless notion, yet thinks fit to own, that our not being able to explain how it operates, is no just objection against it; and that a well-attested revelation is a sufficient ground for believing that such a thing there is †. And to our unspeakable satisfaction we are assured by the Christian revelation, that God is ready on his part to communicate his gra-

\* Vol. V. p. 93.

† Vol. III. p. 488.

LETTER  
XIV.  cious aids to those that humbly apply to him for them, and are at the same time diligent in the use of their own endeavours. The writer here supposes faith to be opposed to reason; and that Christianity is not founded on reason, but on faith as opposed to it. But faith, if it be of the right kind, always supposes that there is a good reason for believing. We are not to believe without reason, nor against it. Christianity is founded on rational evidence. The proof of the Christian law, arising both from the external evidences and attestations given to it; and from the internal characters of goodness and purity, and the excellent tendency of the whole, is such as is proper to convince the reason and judgment: And it has actually had that effect upon many of the ablest persons in all ages ever since it was first promulgated.



LETTER

## LETTER XV.

*Objections against the laws and doctrines of Christianity considered. The Scripture precepts not delivered in a formal code or system, but in a way that is really more useful, and they comprehend all the duties of morality. Concerning our Saviour's precepts in his sermon on the mount. The Gospel-law with respect to polygamy and divorces not contrary to reason and nature, but wise and excellent. The Christian doctrine of a Mediator, and of our redemption by the blood of Christ vindicated against his injurious representation of it. It gives worthy ideas of God, and shews the divine perfections in their proper harmony. It is full of comfort to good men, but gives no encouragement to the obstinately wicked and presumptuous. It is not contrary to reason, though it could not have been discovered by it. This doctrine not owing to the pride of the human heart. Traces of the doctrine of the Trinity to be found, according to Lord Bolingbroke, in all the antient Theistical philosophers.*

S I R,

**H**AVING in my last letter considered what Lord Bolingbroke hath offered with regard to the Christian revelation in general, and

LETTER <sup>XV.</sup> its evidences, I now proceed to examine his objections against the laws and doctrines of Christianity.

With respect to the laws of Christianity, he observes, that “ Christ did not reveal an entire  
 “ body of ethics—That the Gospel does not  
 “ contain a code reaching to all the duties of  
 “ life.—That moral obligations are only oc-  
 “ casionally recommended—And that if all the  
 “ precepts scattered about thro’ the whole New  
 “ Testament, were collected and put together  
 “ in the very words of the sacred writers, they  
 “ would compose a very short as well as uncon-  
 “ nected system of ethics: And that a system  
 “ thus collected from the writings of heathen  
 “ moralists would be more full, more entire,  
 “ and coherent\*.” But it must be considered  
 that the New Testament supposes and confirms  
 the authority of the Old. And out of both to-  
 gether might be compiled a much more com-  
 plete body of ethics, than out of all the writ-  
 ings of the antient philosophers and moralists,  
 which would be found defective in some duties  
 of great consequence, as was observed before,  
 Letter X. p. 245, 247. They are not indeed  
 delivered in a philosophical way; and Lord  
*Bolingbroke* himself owns, that “ this does not  
 “ take off from the dignity, the authority, or  
 “ the utility, even in moral doctrines, of re-  
 “ vealed religion.—Since revelation was not  
 “ given to convince men of the reasonableness

\* Vol. IV. p. 297.



“ of morality—by arguments drawn from<sup>LETTER</sup>  
 “ the reason of things—but to inforce the<sup>XV.</sup>  
 “ practice of it by a superior authority \*.” They  
 are urged in the name of God, and as his laws.  
 They are not wrought up into a formal code,  
 and delivered merely once for all in a system;  
 but they are delivered in various ways, and on  
 different occasions, often in plain and express  
 precepts; at other times by allusions, parables,  
 and comparisons, recommended by excellent  
 examples, and inforced by motives of the highest  
 importance, by divine promises and threaten-  
 ings. And what shews their great usefulness  
 and excellency, though they seem to be deli-  
 vered occasionally, yet it is so ordered, that not  
 one duty of consequence is omitted in the holy  
 Scriptures. All the duties of morality are there  
 frequently repeated and inculcated, and variously  
 inforced.

His Lordship owns, that “ our Saviour’s ser-  
 “ mon on the mount contains, no doubt, many  
 “ excellent precepts of morality.” And if some  
 of them seem too sublime, he thinks the same  
 reason may be given for them that *Tully* gives  
 for the severer doctrines of the *Stoics*. That  
 “ men will always stop short of that pitch of  
 “ virtue which is proposed in them; and it is  
 “ therefore right to carry the notions of it as  
 “ high as possible,” p. 298, 299. He farther  
 observes, that some of Christ’s precepts “ were  
 “ fit and proper enough for a religious sect or

\* Vol. IV. p. 297.

LETTER  
XV.

“ order of men, like the *Essenes*, and might  
 “ be properly enough exacted from those who  
 “ were Christ’s companions, and disciples in a  
 “ stricter sense ; but considered as general du-  
 “ ties are impracticable, inconsistent with na-  
 “ tural instinct as well as law, and quite de-  
 “ structive of society \*.” It is acknowledged,  
 that some of Christ’s precepts were not designed  
 to be of universal obligation at all times, and  
 to all his disciples, but were directed to particular  
 persons, and were only to take place on extra-  
 ordinary occasions. Such was that which he  
 mentions of selling all and following Christ.  
 But it does not appear that in any of our Sa-  
 viour’s precepts he had any view to the *Essenes*,  
 who are not once mentioned in the whole Go-  
 spel. But as to other precepts which this writer  
 mentions, and which are contained in the ser-  
 mon on the mount, and directed to all the dis-  
 ciples, as that concerning the not resisting evil,  
 the taking no thought for the morrow, the lay-  
 ing up treasures not on earth but in heaven :  
 These precepts, which are delivered in a con-  
 cise proverbial way, taken in the true sense and  
 intention of them, are of great and general use,  
 as designed to restrain a malevolent revengeful  
 spirit, anxious distracting cares, and an inor-  
 dinate love of worldly riches. These and other  
 precepts Mr. *Chubb* had endeavoured to expose,  
 and I shall refer to the remarks that are made in

\* Vol. IV. p. 300.

the beginning of the thirteenth letter of my LETTER  
XV.  
former volume, p. 325, *et seq.*

Among the precepts of Christianity may be reckoned those relating to polygamy and divorces. Our author looks upon a prohibition of polygamy to be a prohibition of what the law of nature permits in the fullest manner, and even requires too on several occasions: Concerning which see what was observed above, Letter IX. p. 225, 226. As to divorces, he declares that "with them monogamy may be thought a reasonable institution: Without them it is an unnatural, absurd, and cruel imposition: That it crosses the intention of nature, and stands in opposition to the most effectual means of multiplying the human species†." He seems very much to approve the law of *Moses* for allowing polygamy and divorces, and to think it in this instance much more reasonable and conformable to the law of nature than Christianity is. But he has not fairly represented the *Mosaical* doctrine concerning divorces. He says, "the legal causes for divorces had a great latitude," among which he reckons this for one, "because the husband found another woman whom he thought handsomer, or whom it was more convenient for him to marry." Where he represents it, as if these were *legal causes of divorce*, i. e. causes specified in the original law itself: Which is not true. It was only a corrupt gloss of some

† Vol. V. p. 163.

LETTER of the *Jewish* doctors, who in this as well as  
 XV. other instances perverted the design of the original law. There is no express mention of divorces in the *Jewish* sacred history after the law made concerning this matter, till they are occasionally mentioned by *Isaiah* and *Jeremiah*. In the latter times of the *Jewish* state divorces seem to have been more frequent, and for slighter causes: Though even then there were many among the *Jews*, who opposed the loose interpretation of that law given by others of their doctors. This writer mentions “the differences between the schools of *Hillel* and *Sammeeas* about divorces: And that Christ decided in favour of the latter, and specified but one kind of turpitude as a just cause of divorce\*.” And in this he plainly lets us know he thinks our Saviour was in the wrong. And he goes on to say in a sneering way, that “the law of grace was superior in time to the natural and *Mosaical* law among Christians†.” What follows is mean boasts, mixed with a scandalous insinuation against the chastity of the Blessed Virgin, because *Joseph* had thoughts of divorcing her, *having suspected her to have been got with child before her marriage*. This he produces as an anecdote from *Justin Martyr*, as if it were a piece of secret history, when every one that has read the Gospel knows, that the Evangelist both mentions the suspicion, and shews how causeless it was, and how it was removed, *Matthew* i. 18-24.

\* Vol. V. p. 170. † *Ib.* p. 171.



He expressly calls polygamy and divorces *institutions which have reason and revelation on their side*. Where he seems willing to allow for a while that the *Mosaical* law was from God, that he may draw a patronage from thence for polygamy and divorces: And he speaks of them as if they were positive *institutions* expressly prescribed and enjoined in that law as by divine authority. But this is not fairly represented. They were at best barely permitted. Polygamy is nowhere expressly allowed, much less commanded in the law of *Moses*. But there are several things that plainly imply a disapprobation of it. As particularly the account there given of God's having at the first creation formed one woman for one man, and appointed that there should be an inseparable union between them, and that they *should be one flesh*. And though *Moses* gives instances of polygamy among some of the patriarchs, they are so circumstanced as to make a very disadvantageous representation of that practice, and the consequences of it. The utmost that can be said is, that it is not expressly prohibited in that law. And there are some wise regulations added, which indeed suppose it to be what was then practised, but seem plainly designed to discourage it, and to correct and restrain the abuses which it tended to produce. See *Exod.* xxi. 9, 10. *Deut.* xxi. 15, 16, 17. The law about divorces, *Deut.* xxiv. 1-4. specifies *some matter of uncleanness* as the cause of divorce, which some  
of

LETTER of the *Jewish* doctors themselves, particularly  
<sup>XV.</sup> the *Caraites* who keep close to the letter of the  
 law, understand of adultery, or at least of some  
 immodest and unchaste behaviour. And *Moses*  
*supposes* the woman that was divorced to be  
*defiled* by a second marriage, and therefore or-  
 dains that the first husband should never have  
 it in his power to take her again: Which was  
 manifestly intended to discourage that practice.  
 Our Saviour indeed saith, that *Moses suffered*  
*it for the hardness of their hearts*, Mat. xix. 8.  
 This our author is pleased to represent, as if  
 Christ maintained, that "God tolerated super-  
 "stitious practices, or permitted even crimes to  
 "have the sanction of his law, because of the  
 "hardness of their hearts\*." But to this may  
 be applied the distinction which he himself  
 mentions, and seems to approve, made by the  
 Civilians, "between a *plenary* and *less plenary*  
 "permission, one of which gives a right to do,  
 "and the other exempts from punishment for  
 "doing†." It is the latter kind of permission  
 which was given to polygamy and divorces, and  
 which our Saviour refers to when he talks of  
 their being suffered to do it for the hardness of  
 their hearts: Not as if it was what God coun-  
 tenanced and approved, but they were so far suf-  
 fered to do it as not to incur a legal penalty by do-  
 ing it: But when he sent his well-beloved Son to  
 bring the clearest and most perfect scheme of re-  
 ligion, this practice was more plainly prohibited

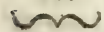
\* Vol. V. p. 170.    † *Ib.* p. 151. 174.

than it had been before. And this instead of LETTER XV. being a just objection against the Christian law is a proof of its great excellency; which has hereby provided for preserving to both sexes their just rights, for strengthening the union between the married pair which it is of great importance to strengthen and improve, for uniting the care of both parents in the education of children, for maintaining the peace and order of families, and for restraining an unbounded dissoluteness and licentiousness. Whereas the contrary practice of polygamy and frequent divorces has a tendency to reduce one half of the human species to a miserable servitude, and to deprive them of their natural rights, to produce the most bitter jealousies and distractions in families, and to hinder the orderly education of children. It gives occasion to unnatural mutilations, and lets the reins loose to a licentious appetite. I shall only farther observe, that an author whom no man will suspect of being prejudiced in favour of the Christian law, has in an injurious Essay, upon considering and comparing what may be said for and against polygamy and divorces, shewn that the law forbidding them is founded upon better reasons, and more for the general good of mankind, and order of society, than the contrary. See Mr. *Hume's moral and political Essays*. Essay XXII. on polygamy and divorces.

As to the doctrines of Christianity, that of Christ being the mediator between God and man, and of our redemption by his blood, are evidently

LETTER

XV.



evidently of great importance. Our author himself represents them as fundamental doctrines of true original Christianity for which he sometimes professes so great a regard, and yet hath done all in his power to expose them.

The doctrine of a Mediator in general he represents as unreasonable and absurd and as having been originally derived from the heathens. He says, “the doctrine of a mediator between  
“ God and man was established in the heathen  
“ theology, and the Christians held a mediation  
“ likewise. But the former seem the most excusable. For the Christian believes that he  
“ may have access at all times to the throne of  
“ grace. But the poor heathen, filled with a  
“ religious horror, durst not approach the divine Monarch except through the mediation  
“ of his ministers\*.” And again, among the extravagant hypotheses of the Pagans, he reckons their notions of mediators and intercessors with God on the behalf of mankind, of atonement and expiation ||. That the heathens had some notion of the necessity of a mediator or mediators between God and man is very true, which might be owing both to the natural sense they had of their own guilt and unworthiness compared with the infinite majesty, greatness and purity, of the Supreme Being, and to some traditions originally derived from extraordinary revelation. But this, like other articles of the antient primitive religion, became greatly cor-

\* Vol. IV. p. 81.

|| *Ib.* p. 372, 373.

rupted,



rupted, and gave occasion to much superstition and confusion in their worship. But in the Christian scheme this doctrine is set in a clear and noble light. The Christian indeed believes, as this writer hath observed, that he hath access at all times to the throne of grace; but he also believes that it is through the great Mediator whom God hath in his infinite wisdom and goodness appointed, that he hath freedom of access. And nothing can give a more amiable idea of the Supreme Being, or have a greater tendency to strengthen our hope and assistance in him, than to consider him as a *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, and as having appointed his well-beloved Son, a person of infinite dignity as the great and only Mediator, through whom he is pleased to communicate the blessings of his grace to sinners of the human race, and in whose name they are to offer up their prayers and praises to him the Father of mercies, and the God of love. It is impossible to prove that there is any thing in such a constitution unworthy of the supreme and infinitely Perfect Being. And if we are assured by a well-attested revelation, that this is the order appointed by God in his sovereign wisdom, it ought to be received and improved with the highest thankfulness. And it nearly imports those to whom this revelation is made known, to take care that they do not reject the grace and mercy of God, and his offered salvation, by refusing to accept it in that way which he himself

LETTER  
XV.

himself hath thought fit to appoint. If this be a divine constitution, and we are as sure that it is so as that the Gospel is true, they are not chargeable with a slight guilt, who instead of making a proper use of it, and taking the advantage it is fitted to yield, presume to cavil at it, and rashly to arraign the proceedings of the supreme wisdom and goodness, in a case of which they cannot possibly pretend to be competent judges.

With respect to the doctrine of redemption, which, he observes from Dr. *Clarke*, is a *main and fundamental article of the Christian faith*, he takes upon him to pronounce that “the utmost endeavours have been and always must be employed in vain, to reduce the entire plan of the divine wisdom in the mission of Christ, and the redemption of man, to a coherent, intelligible, and reasonable scheme of doctrines and facts†.” And it is the intire design of the thirty-sixth and thirty seventh of his *Fragments and Essays*, to expose that doctrine, and to answer what Dr. *Clarke* had offered to shew that there is nothing in it contrary to reason†.

He observes that “the fall of man lies at the foundation of the doctrine of redemption, and that the account of it is irreconcilable to every idea we have of the wisdom, justice, and goodness, to say nothing of the dignity, of the Supreme Being||.” I need not add any

† Vol. IV. p. 318.  
p 283, 284.

† Vol. V. p. 279, *et seq.*

|| *Id.*

thing

thing here to what has been already offered on that subject in my thirteenth letter. The great corruption of mankind has been acknowledged by the most diligent observers in all ages; and great is the guilt and misery they have thereby incurred: And it is no way reasonable to suppose that this was the original state of the human nature. The redemption of mankind is a provision made by infinite wisdom and goodness for recovering them from the corruption into which they had fallen, and the guilt they had incurred, and for restoring them to righteousness and true holiness, and even raising them to everlasting felicity, in such a way as is most consistent with the honour of God's government, and of his illustrious moral excellencies. And if there be some things relating to the methods of our redemption which we are not well able distinctly to explain or comprehend, it is not to be wondered at, considering that these are things of a high nature, and which depend upon the determinations and councils of the divine wisdom, of which without his revelation of them we cannot assume to be proper judges.

There are two questions here proper to be considered; one concerning expiation in general; the other concerning that particular method of expiation held forth to us in the Gospel, by the death and sufferings of Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

As to the general question, it can scarce be reasonably denied, that if we consider God as  
the

LETTER  
XV.



LETTER <sup>XV.</sup> the wise and righteous governor of the world who is infinitely just as well as merciful, if any expedient can be fixed upon for his pardoning his sinful offending creatures, and dispensing his graces and benefits to them, in such a way as at the same time to manifest his invariable love of order, his just detestation of all moral evil, and the steady regard he hath to the vindicating the authority of his government and laws; this would be most worthy of his rectoral wisdom, and shew forth his attributes, especially his justice and mercy, in their proper harmony, so as to render him both most amiable and most venerable.

If it be alledged, that repentance alone is a sufficient expiation: Not to repeat what hath been already offered on this head in the eleventh Letter, p. 253, 254, it may be demanded whether God could in strict justice punish sinners for their transgressions of his laws, and for the crimes they have committed? If he could, it is because those transgressions and crimes really deserve punishment. If those crimes deserve punishment, it must be an act of free sovereign grace and mercy to remit or not to inflict the deserved penalty. And as it is an act of sovereignty, it must depend upon what shall seem fit to the Supreme and Infinitely Wise and Perfect Mind to determine upon a full view of what is best and properest upon the whole. And are we so well acquainted with what the Infinite Majesty oweth to himself, and what the greatest



good of the moral world doth require, as to take LETTER XV.  
 upon us positively to determine a thing in which  
 the divine authority and prerogatives, and the  
 reason of his government are so nearly con-  
 cerned? Upon what foundation can we pre-  
 tend to be sure, that the great Governor of  
 the world is obliged to pardon sinners at all  
 times and in all cases, barely and immediately  
 upon their repentance, and even to crown their  
 imperfect obedience, though attended with many  
 failures and defects, with the glorious reward of  
 eternal life? And if no man can pretend with-  
 out an inexcusable rashness and ignorance to be  
 sure of this, who can take upon him to deter-  
 mine, what expiation or satisfaction for sin, be-  
 sides the repentance of the sinner, the most wise  
 and righteous Governor of the world may see  
 fit to insist upon? This, if any thing, seems to  
 be a proper subject for divine revelation.

Dr. *Clarke* had argued, as his Lordship ob-  
 serves, that the “ custom of sacrifices which uni-  
 “ versally obtained shews it to have been the  
 “ general sense of mankind, that some expi-  
 “ ation was necessary for sin, and that God  
 “ would not be appeased without some punish-  
 “ ment and satisfaction \*.” Our author speaks  
 of this way of arguing with great contempt.

He says, that “ the most absurd notions which  
 “ superstition ever spread in contradiction to the  
 “ law of nature and reason, are applied to the  
 “ proceedings of God with man.” But since it

\* Vol. V. p. 286.

LETTER <sup>XV.</sup> is a matter of fact which cannot be denied, that the offering sacrifices to God was one of the most antient external rites of religion of which we have any account; since it obtained early and universally, not only among polytheists and idolaters, but among the most religious adorers of the one true God; this naturally leadeth us to conclude, that it was a part of the primitive religion originally enjoined to the first ancestors of the human race, and from them transmitted to their descendants. Upon any other supposition it is hard to conceive, how men should come so universally to look upon the taking away the life of a beast, to be well pleasing in the sight of God, and an acceptable piece of divine worship. The best way of accounting for this seems to be that it was a sacred rite of divine appointment, which was originally intended for wise and valuable purposes; *viz.* to impress men's minds with a sense of the evil and demerit of sin, and to be an acknowledgement on the part of the sinner that his sins deserved punishment. And at the same time to be a pledge and token of God's being willing to receive an atonement, and of his pardoning grace and mercy. And since it appears to have been an original part of the divine scheme, that God would send his Son into the world in the fulness of time to suffer and die for the redemption of mankind, in whose blood that covenant was founded, by virtue of which good men in all ages were to be saved upon their repentance, and

sincere though imperfect obedience; then sup-  
 posing that some discovery of this was made to  
 the first parents of the human race after their  
 apostasy as a foundation for their hope and com-  
 fort; this gives a most reasonable account of the  
 institution of such a sacred rite; than which no-  
 thing could be better fitted to keep up a notion  
 and expectation of a suffering Redeemer, and  
 to be a constant memorial to them both of their  
 own guilt and of the divine mercy. And hence  
 those sacrifices were very properly accompanied  
 with prayers, confessions of sin, and thanksgiv-  
 ings, and were regarded as federal rites, and to-  
 kens of friendship and reconciliation between  
 God and man. But this like other parts of the  
 primitive religion became corrupted. The true  
 original design of sacrifices was forgotten and  
 lost, though the external rite still continued;  
 and they were looked upon as in themselves and  
 of their own nature properly expiatory.

Our way is now prepared to consider the que-  
 stion as it relates particularly to that method of  
 expiation, which is held forth to us in the Gos-  
 pel by the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus  
 Christ, a Mediator of infinite dignity. And  
 with regard to this he urgeth, that “our notions  
 “of God’s moral attributes will lead us to think,  
 “that God would be satisfied more agreeably  
 “to his mercy and goodness without any ex-  
 “piation upon the repentance of the offenders,  
 “and more agreeably to his justice with any



LETTER<sup>XV.</sup> "other expiation rather than this\*." In opposition to this, it may be affirmed, that supposing an expiation to have been necessary on the behalf of sinful men, none can be conceived more worthy, or more valuable, or more capable of answering the most excellent ends, than that which is set before us in the Gospel.

We are there taught, that upon a foresight of man's apostacy, and the miseries and ruin to which the human race would be exposed by their iniquities and transgressions, God had in his infinite wisdom and grace determined to provide a Saviour for recovering them from their guilt and misery to holiness and happiness: And that it was appointed in the divine councils that this Saviour should, in order to the accomplishing this great design, take upon him human flesh, and should not only bring a clear revelation of the divine will to mankind, and exhibit a most perfect example of universal holiness, goodness, and purity, but that he should on the behalf of sinful men, and to make atonement for their offences, submit to undergo the most grievous sufferings and death: That accordingly in that season which seemed fittest to the divine wisdom, God sent his own well-beloved Son into the world, a person of infinite dignity, upon this most gracious and benevolent purpose and design: That this glorious person actually took upon him our nature, and lived and conversed among men here on earth: That he brought



the most perfect discoveries of the divine will that had been ever made to mankind, for instructing them in those things which it was of the highest importance to them to know: That in his sacred life and practice he exhibited all the beauties of holiness, and yielded the most perfect obedience to the divine law, which he exemplified in the dignity of its authority and in the excellency of its precepts: That besides this, prompted by his own generous love to mankind, and in obedience to the divine appointment, he voluntarily submitted for our sakes to the deepest humiliations and abasements, and the most dolorous agonies and passions, followed by a most cruel and ignominious death, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. By these his sufferings and obedience on our behalf, which was infinitely pleasing in the sight of God, he became the propitiation for the sins of the world, and did that in reality which the sacrifices could only do in type and figure. And on the account of what he hath done and suffered on the behalf of sinful men, God has been graciously pleased to promise to grant a full and free pardon of all their sins upon their sincere repentance, to communicate to them through this great Mediator the blessings of his grace, and to crown their sincere though imperfect obedience with the glorious reward of eternal life. That accordingly that suffering Saviour having

LETTER by himself purged our sins was raised again from  
 XV, the dead, and crowned with glory and honour :  
 That he now appears for guilty men as their great  
 advocate and intercessor : And is constituted the  
 great dispenser of those spiritual blessings which  
 he had by the divine appointment procured for  
 us, and is the author of eternal salvation to them  
 that obey him.

This is one illustrious instance of what our  
 author declares, that *the theology of the Gospel*  
*is marvellous*. It could only have been known  
 by divine revelation : And now that it is dis-  
 covered to us, it calls for our highest admira-  
 tion, and thankfulness.

Let us now consider the objections he hath  
 urged against it.

He represents it as absurd to suppose, that  
 “ God sent his only-begotten Son who had not  
 “ offended him, to be sacrificed for men who  
 “ had offended him, that he might expiate their  
 “ sins, and satisfy his own anger ‡.” As to  
 God’s sending his own Son to be the Saviour  
 of sinful men, to redeem them from misery and  
 ruin, and to raise them to eternal life, it cannot  
 reasonably be denied, that the more glorious and  
 wonderful the person was, and the greater his  
 dignity, the better was he fitted for accomplish-  
 ing the great work to which he was designed ;  
 and the greater value it derived to the obedience  
 he yielded, and the sufferings he endured on  
 our behalf. This writer observes, that “ the

‡ Vol. V. p. 286.

“ means of reconciling all sinners to an offended LETTER  
 “ Deity were made by the Pagan theology ex- XV.  
 “ tremely easy”——And he particularly instances  
 in expiatory sacrifices†. But no such thing can  
 be justly objected against the doctrine of our re-  
 demption by the blood of Christ. It is cer-  
 tainly of the highest importance to mankind,  
 that they should not entertain too slight thoughts  
 of the evil of sin, or look upon it as too easy  
 a matter to obtain the favour of God when they  
 had offended him, or imagine that his just dis-  
 pleasure against sin may be averted by trivial ex-  
 pedients. All this is effectually provided against  
 in the Gospel scheme. The expiation in this  
 case is supposed to be effected by a sacrifice of  
 infinite virtue, not to be equalled or repeated.  
 This gives the most effectual conviction, that  
 it is not a slight or trifling matter, to atone for  
 the sins of men, and to offer such an expiation  
 as is suited to the majesty of God to accept. No  
 man that believes this can possibly entertain slight  
 thoughts of the evil and demerit of sin. It tend-  
 eth to fill us with the most awful reverential  
 conceptions of the infinite majesty of the Su-  
 preme Being, his righteousness and purity, and  
 the inviolable regard he hath to the authority  
 of his government and laws.

As to the other part of the objection, that it  
 is absurd to suppose, that “ the Son of God who  
 “ had not offended should be sacrificed for men

† Vol. V. p. 210.



LETTER<sup>XV.</sup> "who had offended him:" The truth is, that if he had not been perfectly innocent and holy, he could not have been properly fitted to expiate the sins of men. Had he been himself guilty and a sinner, instead of making an atonement for the sins of others, he must have been punished for his own. Nor could his oblation have been of such value and merit as to be proper for answering the great ends for which it was designed. If it be still objected, that it is unjust and cruel that an innocent person should be punished for the guilty: I answer that it will be allowed, that if the evils and sufferings the guilty had incurred by their crimes, should by the mere arbitrary act and authority of the supreme ruling power, be laid on an innocent person without and against his own consent, this would be contrary to all the rules both of goodness and justice; and would be a confounding the whole order of things. But this is far from being the case. The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ were not arbitrarily imposed upon him by the mere authority of God. He himself freely undertook the great work of our redemption. He consented to undergo these temporary sufferings for the most valuable ends, for promoting the glory of God, and the salvation of mankind. The admitting him therefore to suffer on our behalf, was not doing him any injustice, but giving him an opportunity of performing the most wonderful act of obedience, and exhibiting the most astonishing instance of love



love and goodness towards perishing sinners, LETTER  
XV.  
 from whence according to the divine compact and covenant, the most glorious benefits were to redound to the human race; and he himself was to be recompensed with the highest glory in that nature which he assumed. It is no hard matter therefore to answer the question our author puts, "Whether the truth of that maxim, that it is not equally fit that an innocent person should be extremely miserable, as that he should be free from such misery, the innocence of the Lamb of God, and the sufferings and ignominious death of Christ, can be reconciled together, and how \*?" That Christ endured the most grievous sufferings, and was put to a most cruel and ignominious death, and consequently that in his case a person perfectly innocent was exposed to the greatest sufferings, is a matter of fact which cannot be denied. And it cannot reasonably be pretended, that it renders those sufferings more unjust, that he should suffer on the account of sinful men, to make atonement for their sins, and to procure for them the most valuable blessings, than if he had endured those sufferings without any such view at all. The sufferings of a most holy and righteous person are perfectly reconcileable to all the rules of justice, and to the order and reason of things, provided those sufferings are what he himself hath voluntarily undertaken, and that they answer a most valuable and excellent end

\* Vol. V. p. 288.

LETTER for the public good, and that the suffering person himself afterwards receives a glorious recompence. And according to the account given us in the Gospel, all these circumstances concurred in the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. *Clarke* had mentioned some of the excellent ends, which the sufferings and death of Christ were designed and fitted to answer. Such as, that this method “tends to discountenance” and prevent presumption, to discourage men “from repeating their transgressions, to give them a deep sense of the heinous nature of sin, and to convince them of the excellency and importance of the laws of God, and the indispensable necessity of paying obedience to them ||.” Lord *Bolingbroke* has not offered any argument to prove that redemption by the death of Christ was not well fitted to answer these ends, but in his dictatorial manner has pronounced, that “the prudential reasons assigned by Dr. *Clarke* for the death of Christ, would appear futile and impertinent, if applied to human councils, but in their application to the divine, they became profane and impious——That the death of Christ, instead of being proper to discountenance presumption, and to discourage men from repeating their transgressions, as *Clarke* pretends, might, and in fact has countenanced presumption, without discouraging men from

|| *Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion*, p. 251. Ed. 7th.

“ repeating

“repeating their transgressions†.” There is <sup>LETTER</sup> no doctrine but may be abused by the perverseness of bad and licentious men. Sinners may take encouragement from the goodness and mercy of God to continue in their evil courses, in hopes that he will not punish them for their crimes. And on the other hand, the doctrine concerning the justice of God may be abused to harden men in their sins, and to cut them off from all hopes of mercy, which would have an equal tendency to destroy all piety and virtue, and subvert the very foundations of religion. But the Gospel scheme of our reconciliation by the death of Christ provides admirably against both these extremes. On the one hand, the fullest discoveries are made of the infinite grace and goodness of God towards mankind, in that he gave his only-begotten Son that through his sufferings and death a way might be opened for redeeming and saving the lost human race. A free and universal offer is made of pardon and salvation to all sinners without exception, that shall accept of offered mercy upon the gracious and reasonable terms which are there appointed. The most exceeding great and precious promises are made, the most gracious assistances are provided to help our infirmities, and we are raised to the privileges of the children of God, and to the most animating hopes of a glorious resurrection and eternal life, as the reward even of our imperfect obedience. It is impossible that

XV.

† Vol. V. p. 289.



LETTER any thing should give us a more amiable idea  
 XV. of the Supreme Being, and of his wonderful  
 love to mankind. Nothing can have a greater  
 tendency to enlarge our joys, and to excite the  
 most grateful and devout affections towards our  
 heavenly Father, as the father of mercies, and  
 the God of love, and towards the Lord Jesus  
 Christ, the great Saviour and lover of our na-  
 tures, and to lay us under the strongest ingage-  
 ments to love and obey him.

But then on the other hand, lest this should  
 be abused, the Gospel presents the Supreme Be-  
 ing as of infinite justice, righteousness and pu-  
 rity, who hath such a hatred against sin, and  
 such a regard to the authority of his government  
 and laws that he would not receive guilty trans-  
 gressors of the human race to his grace and fa-  
 vour, upon any less consideration than the suf-  
 ferings and sacrifice of his well-beloved Son on  
 their behalf; than which nothing could pos-  
 sibly exhibit a more awful display of God's dis-  
 pleasure against sin: So that he hath taken care  
 to manifest his righteousness and justice, even  
 in the methods of our reconciliation. We are  
 farther assured, that though the sacrifice Christ  
 hath offered be so infinitely meritorious, yet the  
 virtue of it is only applied upon such terms as the  
 divine wisdom hath appointed, *i. e.* to those  
 only that return to God by a sincere repentance  
 and new obedience. So that on this plan the  
 necessity of holiness and obedience is most  
 strongly and effectually secured, since without  
 this



this there can be no interest in that great atonement, and consequently no hope of pardon and salvation. And the severest threatenings are denounced against those who abuse all this grace, and turn it into licentiousness: And they are warned, that their punishments shall be heightened in proportion to the aggravations of their crime. Thus the Gospel scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ hath an admirable propriety and harmony in it, and bears upon it the illustrious characters of a divine original. It giveth the greatest hopes to the upright and sincere, without affording the least ground of encouragement to the obstinately wicked and presumptuous sinner. It represents God as most amiable and most awful, infinitely good, gracious and merciful, and at the same time infinitely just, righteous, and holy. These characters in a lower degree must concur in an excellent earthly prince; much more must they be supposed to be united in the highest possible degree of eminency in the Supreme Being, the All-wise and All-perfect Governor of the world.

He concludes his remarks in what Dr. *Clarke* had offered to shew that the doctrine of our redemption by Christ is not contrary to reason, with a *general reflection or two*. One is this. “ Let us suppose a great prince governing a  
“ wicked and rebellious people: He has it in  
“ his power to punish, but thinks fit to pardon  
“ them. But he orders his only and well-be-  
“ loved Son to be put to death, to expiate their  
“ sins,

LETTER<sup>XV.</sup> “ sins, and satisfy his royal vengeance.” And then he asks, “ Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reason, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wise, or just, or good? No man dares to say, that it would, except it be a divine\*.” But no divine would put so absurd a case, which, as he represents it, could not possibly answer any valuable end. The King could have no right to put his Son to death for the crimes of rebels, and to do it against his consent would be the height of injustice and cruelty: And even if he should consent, it would be the irretrievable loss of an hopeful Prince both to the King his father, and to the community who had an interest in his life. But if a case could be supposed, in which the death of an excellent Prince would be the saving of a state from ruin, and the best and properest means for averting the greatest public evils and calamities, and for procuring the greatest public happiness; I believe it would be acknowledged to be a glorious action for a King to give up his son, and for the Prince his son to give up himself to death, for so extensive a benefit, and would be celebrated as such to all succeeding ages. Though still in that case there could be no hope of the suffering person’s being restored to life, or to the public, or having a proper reward given him for so consummate a virtue: Which makes a vast difference between this case, or indeed any other that could be put in human

\* Vol. V. p. 289.

governments, and our redemption by the sufferings and death of Christ as stated in the Gospel. LETTER  
XV.

His second reflection is, that “*Dr. Clarke* acknowledges, that human reason could never have discovered such a method as this for the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God.” From whence he argues, that “therefore it cannot be said that this method is agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, which is what *Dr. Clarke* here undertook to shew\*.” But there is no inconsistency between these. A thing may be of such a kind that reason could not have discovered it, and yet when discovered may have nothing in it contrary to reason, and may be such as unprejudiced reason will approve. And this I take to be the case of the Scripture doctrine of our redemption. Our author indeed hath attempted to shew, that this doctrine is more absurd than any thing that can be found in any system of paganism. But what he offers to this purpose is entirely to be charged, not upon the doctrine itself as laid down in Scripture, but upon the base and injurious representation he is pleased to make of it. He concludes with saying, that “the heathens could not imagine any thing so repugnant, as the doctrine of our redemption by the death of Christ, to all their ideas of order, of justice, of goodness, and even of theism†.” If this were so, the heathen world were far from be-

\* Vol. V. p. 290.

† *Ib.* p. 291.



LETTER

XV.



ing so disposed and prepared for receiving the Christian mysteries as he sometimes pretends they were. It will be acknowledged, that *Christ crucified* was to the *Greeks*, who had a high conceit of their own wisdom and learning, *foolishness*: But it was the *wisdom and power of God*, as St. Paul expresseth it. And accordingly this doctrine of the cross of Christ triumphed over all the opposition which their boasted learning and philosophy, assisted by the power and authority of the civil magistrate, the influence and artifices of the priests, and the prejudices of the vulgar, and the vices and passions of men could raise against it. There are, no doubt, great difficulties attending the scheme of our redemption. But this writer, if he were consistent with himself, ought not to make this an objection against its truth or divine original. He observes, that “ nothing is more conformable  
 “ to our ideas of the infinitely Perfect Being,  
 “ than to believe that human reason cannot ac-  
 “ count for the proceedings of infinite wisdom  
 “ in a multitude of instances, in many of those  
 “ perhaps that seem the most obvious to it\*.” And he elsewhere declares, that “ if infinite  
 “ wisdom and power created and governs the  
 “ universe, we must prepare to meet with se-  
 “ veral appearances, which we cannot explain,  
 “ nor reconcile to the ideas we endeavour to  
 “ form of the divine perfections, and which are  
 “ disproportionable to our and every other

\* Vol. V. p. 182.

finite



“finite understanding\*.” And finding fault with the pertness and presumption of divines, he says, “It would pass for downright madness, if we were not accustomed to it, to hear a creature of the lowest form of intelligent beings, undertake to penetrate the designs, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the mysteries, of infinite wisdom, which the most exalted of created intelligences would adore in silence†.” This may be justly turned against himself. It is no presumption to believe what God has revealed of his councils concerning the methods of our salvation, or to think and speak of them as far as he has been pleased to declare them. But it is an inexcusable arrogance to presume to arraign the proceedings of infinite wisdom made known to us in a well-attested revelation, because there are some things relating to them which we are not able distinctly to explain, or to account for. This is what our author hath done with a rashness and insolence that is shocking. Some passages of this kind have been already produced, to which I shall add one more. Speaking of the mystery of our redemption by the blood of Christ, he asserts, that “the love there displayed is partiality, and the justice there shewed is injustice. — And that injustice and cruelty are united in this, that mankind would not have been redeemed if the *Jews* had not crucified Christ, and yet they were rejected and punished for crucifying him‡.” He here

\* Vol. V. p. 365.    † *Ib.* p. 297.    ‡ *Ib.* p. 582.

LETTER<sup>XV.</sup> chargeth it as a great injustice and cruelty to re-  
 ject and punish the *Jews* for crucifying Christ,  
 because mankind could not have been redeemed  
 without it: And yet he had before observed,  
 that “Christ was sacrificed by men who meant  
 “no expiation, and who meant a murder, not  
 “a sacrifice \*.” God’s bringing the greatest good  
 out of the injustice and wickedness of the  
*Jews*, which he foresaw and permitted, but did  
 not cause, is indeed an illustrious proof of his  
 infinite wisdom, but is no extenuation of their  
 crime: And therefore there was no injustice in  
 punishing them for it. But if the *Jews* had  
 not crucified Christ, which is the case this  
 writer puts, and which depends upon the modest  
 supposition of God’s being mistaken in his pre-  
 science, it would not follow that his designs for  
 the redemption of mankind would have been  
 disappointed, infinite wisdom would not have  
 been at a loss for proper methods to accomplish  
 its own glorious views.

This is not the only passage, in which our  
 author, who upon all other occasions sets no  
 bounds to his invectives against the *Jews*, ex-  
 presses some pity towards them as having been  
 very hardly dealt with in being punished for  
 crucifying our Lord. He observes, that “Christ  
 “contrived at his death to appear innocent to  
 “the *Roman* governor, and at the same time  
 “contrived to appear guilty to the *Jews*, and  
 “to make them the instruments of his death,

\* Vol. V. p. 291.

“ by a sequel of the most artful behaviour.—LETTER  
 “ That they were rejected for not believing <sup>XV.</sup>  
 “ him to be the Messiah.—And he kept them  
 “ in their error, at least he did nothing to draw  
 “ them out of it, that they might bring him to  
 “ the cross, and complete the redemption of  
 “ mankind, without knowing that they did it  
 “ at their own expence \*.” Nothing can pos-  
 sibly be more unfair and disingenuous than this  
 representation. It is evident that our Lord took  
 all proper opportunities of laying before the  
*Jews* the proofs of his Messiahship: And that  
 nothing could be more wisely conducted than  
 the way he took gradually to remove their pre-  
 judices, though he did not make an express and  
 public declaration of his being the Messiah, till  
 the evidence should be completed, and it should  
 plainly appear, that his kingdom was not of  
 this world. Instead of laying plots to engage  
 the *Jews* to put him to death, he, on many oc-  
 casions, used the most prudent precautions to  
 avoid the effects of their malice, till he could  
 do it no longer without betraying the truth,  
 and counteracting the design upon which he  
 was sent.

The last thing I shall take notice of with re-  
 gard to what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered con-  
 cerning the doctrine of our redemption, is,  
 that he represents it as having proceeded from  
*the pride of the human heart*. He blames  
 Archbishop *Tillotson* for observing very patheti-

\* Vol. IV. p. 537, 538, 539.

LETTER cally at the close of one of his Sermons, That  
 XV. “ when the angels fell, God left them in their  
 “ fallen state : But when man fell, he sent his  
 “ Son, his only-begotten Son, his dearly-be-  
 “ loved Son, to redeem the race by his suffer-  
 “ ings and passions.” Upon which he remarks,  
 that “ this raises us not only to an equality with  
 “ the angels, but to a superiority over them\*.”  
 And he afterwards censures the divines for be-  
 ing “ unwilling to leave their notions of hu-  
 “ man worth and importance, or of the de-  
 “ signs of God in favour of man.” And says,  
 that “ though our religion forbids pride, and  
 “ teaches humility, yet the whole system of it  
 “ tends to inspire the former.” He instances in  
 its teaching, that “ man was made after the  
 “ image of God, and that God abandoned my-  
 “ riads of angels, but determined to raise man  
 “ from his fall by the sacrifice of his Son.” And  
 he asks, “ Is it possible to conceive higher no-  
 “ tions of a created being than these revealed  
 “ truths must inspire †?” It is certain, that,  
 according to the Scripture account, God *spared*  
*not the angels that sinned*, though originally  
 superior to the human race, but sent his Son to  
 redeem mankind. And undoubtedly there were  
 wise reasons for that proceeding, which God  
 hath not thought fit to reveal to us, and which  
 therefore we cannot pretend to judge of. But  
 whatever was the reason of it, God’s extending  
 his grace and mercy to mankind in so marvel-

\* Vol. IV. p. 506, 507. † Vol. V. p. 347.



lous a way certainly demandeth our most grate-<sup>LETTER</sup>  
ful acknowledgements. We are taught every <sup>XV.</sup>  
where in Scripture to ascribe the great things  
God hath done for us, not to any worthiness in  
ourselves, but merely to his sovereign unobliged  
grace and goodness. It is manifest that the  
whole scheme of Christianity tendeth to inspire  
us with the most adoring thoughts of God's in-  
finite majesty, greatness, and purity, and at the  
same time to impress and affect our hearts with  
the most humbling sense of our own meanness,  
guilt, and unworthiness. It tendeth not to in-  
spire us with pride, but with gratitude for un-  
deserved favours and benefits: And at the same  
time that it filleth us with the highest admiration  
of the divine condescension and goodness to-  
wards us, it teacheth us to sink low into the  
very dust before his glorious majesty, acknow-  
leging that we are less than the least of his  
mercies, and giving him the whole glory of our  
salvation.

It is observable that Lord *Bolingbroke* seems  
on many occasions very solicitous to prevent  
our having too high a conceit of our own ex-  
cellence and importance. He blames the Pagan  
theists for flattering human nature, when they  
taught that a good man imitates God, and that  
God is a lover of mankind, and made man to  
be happy \*. To human pride and ambition he  
attributes the notion of the soul's being a spiri-  
tual substance distinct from the body, and the

\* Vol. V. p. 317, 318.

LETTER <sup>XV.</sup> belief of its immortality \*. To this also he ascribes the doctrine of a particular providence, and the notion that God is attentive to the prayers and wants of men; and is ready on many occasions to assist, protect, and reward the good, and to punish or reclaim the wicked †. It seems then that for fear of being thought too proud and assuming, we must deny that we have any souls distinct from our bodies, or at least must confess them to be like our bodies corruptible and mortal; we must not dare to aspire after a conformity to the Deity in his moral excellencies, nor to think that he loveth us, or is concerned for our happiness; we must either not address ourselves to him at all, or not presume to imagine that he heareth or regardeth our prayers. It would be thinking too highly of our own importance to imagine that God exerciseth any care or inspection over us, or that he taketh notice of our actions with approbation or displeasure, or will call us to an account for them. Thus this sagacious writer hath found out the secret of banishing religion out of the world, under pretence of guarding against the pride of the human heart.

I need not take any particular notice of what his Lordship hath offered concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. He affirms, that “ the  
“ Scriptures which are come down to us are  
“ very far from being vouchers of the Trinity  
“ we profess to believe. --- And that we may

\* Vol IV. p. 481.

† Vol. V. p. 418.

“ assure

“ assure ourselves, that many of the Scriptures<sup>LETTER</sup>  
 “ and traditions which obtained in the primitive<sup>XV.</sup>  
 “ ages, deposed against this Trinity \*.” Where  
 he talks with as much confidence of Scriptures  
 and traditions, which he supposes to be lost, and  
 of what was contained in them, as if he him-  
 self had seen and read them. He chargeth St.  
*Peter* and St. *Paul* with inconsistency and con-  
 tradiction, in sometimes calling Christ a man,  
 and at other times talking a different language,  
 and calling him God †. Though supposing him  
 to have the human nature in a near union with  
 the divine, there is no contradiction in it at all.  
 He has a long marginal note about the senti-  
 ments of the primitive fathers concerning the  
 Trinity, and censures Bishop *Bull* ‡. And he  
 afterwards enlarges on the differences among  
 Christians relating to it, and the disputes be-  
 tween *Arius* and *Athanasius* ||. But he says  
 nothing on this subject but what is very com-  
 mon, and has been often more fully and di-  
 stinctly insisted upon by others, and therefore  
 deserves no particular consideration here. What  
 seems more peculiar to him is, that in the ac-  
 count he gives of the doctrine of the Trinity,  
 he represents it as having been originally de-  
 rived from the heathen theology. He says, that  
 the heathen philosophers “ assumed a Trinity of  
 “ divine ~~hypotases~~ in the Godhead. They held

~~hypotases~~  
 hypostases

\* Vol. IV. p. 493. † *Ib.* p. 489. ‡ *Ib.* p. 98, et seq.  
 || *Ib.* p. 483, et seq.

LETTER  
XV. { “ a *Monad* or Unity above all essence, a second  
“ proceeding eternally from the first, and a  
“ third proceeding eternally from the second,  
“ or from the first and second \*.” That the hy-  
pothesis of the Trinity made a part of the  
*Egyptian* theology. “ It was brought from  
“ *Egypt* into *Greece* by *Orpheus*, whosoever he  
“ was, and probably by others in that remote  
“ antiquity : And that it was in much use after-  
“ wards, and we find the traces of it in all the  
“ theistical philosophers taught †.” He speaks  
of the *Egyptian*, *Pythagorean*, *Platonic*, and  
of the *Zoroastrian*, *Chaldaic*, and *Samothra-  
cian* Trinity ‡. And he mentions it also as  
having been antiently taught among the *Chinese*,  
and produces a passage out of one of their an-  
tient books to this purpose ||. A late ingenious  
author has carried this still farther, and has en-  
deavoured at large to shew that some vestiges of  
the doctrines of the Trinity are to be found  
among the fages of all nations, times, and re-  
ligions §. But he differs from Lord *Bolingbroke*  
in this, that whereas his Lordship charges it on  
the vain subtilties and reveries of the antient  
metaphysical theology, this gentleman supposes  
it must have been owing to supernatural reve-  
lation, or some tradition originally derived from  
thence.¶ And I cannot help thinking, that

\* Vol. IV. p. 94, 95. † *Ib.* p. 97, 470, 471. ‡ *Ib.* p. 472.  
§ Vol. V. p. 230. § See Chevalier Ramfay's Principles of  
natural and revealed religion, Vol. II. Chap. 2.

supposing


¶ See also *Maurice's Indian Antiquities*, who is very copious  
on this subject.



supposing the fact to have been as they both re-<sup>LETTER</sup>  
present it, this seems to be a more reasonable <sup>XV.</sup>  
way of accounting for it. Since it is otherwise  
not easy to conceive how it should come to  
pass that so many great and wise men in dif-  
ferent ages and nations from the most antient  
times should have agreed in acknowleging some  
kind of triad in the divine nature.

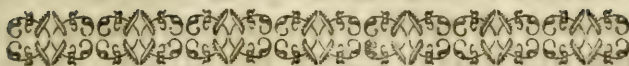
I shall only take notice of one passage more  
in Lord *Bolingbroke's* works relating to the  
Trinity : It is this, That “ the doctrine of the  
“ Trinity gives the *Mahometans* as much rea-  
“ son to say, that the revelation which *Ma-*  
“ *homet* published was necessary to establish  
“ the unity of the Supreme Being, in opposi-  
“ tion to the polytheism which Christianity  
“ had introduced, as Christians have to insist,  
“ that the revelation which Christ published a  
“ few centuries before, was necessary to esta-  
“ blish the unity of the Godhead against the  
“ Pagan polytheism \*.” But the case was very  
different. The unity of God could not be  
more strongly and expressly asserted than it is in  
the Holy Scriptures both of the Old Testament  
and the New : So that the pretended revelation  
of *Mahomet* was needless in this respect. It is  
a fundamental principle of Christianity, that  
there is but one God, and one Mediator be-  
tween God and man, and that Jesus Christ is  
he. Those who maintain the doctrine of the

• Vol. IV. p. 501.

LETTER Trinity still hold the unity of the Godhead.  
 XV.  Convince them that the Trinity is inconsistent  
 with that unity, and they will abandon it.  
 They cannot therefore be justly charged with  
 polytheism, which is only imputed to them  
 by a consequence which they expressly deny and  
 disavow.



LETTER



## L E T T E R   X V I .

*The Christian doctrine of future retributions vindicated. It does not charge God with injustice in this present state. Future punishments not contrary to reason or the divine attributes. The pretence that they can be of no use either for reparation or terror, examined. The rewards and punishments of a future state shall be proportioned to the different degrees of virtue and vice. The propriety of appointing a state of trial to reasonable beings. It is wisely ordered, that the sentence at the day of judgment shall be final and irreversible. The Christian representation of that judgment and its consequences, solemn and affecting, and of excellent use. Lord Bolingbroke's injurious charge against the primitive Christians. His complaints of the corruptions brought into the Christian Church. Such writers very improper to set up for reformers. True genuine Christianity needs not fear the assaults of its ablest adversaries.*

S I R,

**I**T is a satisfaction to me, as I am apt to think it is to you, that the work is drawing near to a conclusion ; and the more so, as you know that I have, during a considerable part of the time  
in

LETTER in which I have been engaged in it, laboured  
 XVI. under great indisposition of body, which has  
 rendered it more tedious and fatiguing to me, than otherwise it would have been. It will be well, if some marks of this do not appear in the performance itself. If this be the case, I hope candid allowance will be made for it.

The only thing that now remains to be considered, with regard to Lord *Bolingbroke's* attempts against Christianity, relateth to what he has offered concerning the Scripture doctrine of rewards and punishments. He has done all he could to expose that doctrine, and Christianity on the account of it, especially the doctrine of future punishments. This is the principal design of several of his Fragments and Essays in the latter part of the fifth volume of his works; particularly of the sixty-sixth, sixty-seventh, sixty-eighth, sixty-ninth, seventieth, seventy-first, seventy-second, and seventy-seventh, of those Fragments and Essays.

Before I enter on a distinct consideration of what he has offered on that subject, I would make two general observations.

The one is, that he asserts the doctrine of future rewards and punishments to be an original doctrine of the Christian religion. He expressly asserts, that “future rewards and punishments  
 “are sanctions of the evangelical law\* :” That  
 “it was part of the original revelation.—And  
 “when the Christians adopted this doctrine,

\* Vol. V. p. 513.

“they



“ they received the new law and the new  
 “ sanction together on the faith of the same re-  
 “ velation \*.” And indeed it cannot be de-  
 nied, that this is a doctrine strongly and most  
 expressly insisted on by our blessed Saviour him-  
 self as a doctrine of principal importance. So that  
 this may be justly regarded as a fundamental do-  
 ctrine of that original Christianity for which  
 this writer professeth so great an esteem, and the  
 truth, the excellency, and even divinity of  
 which he sometimes pretends to acknowlege.

The other observation is this: That he makes  
 the worst representation imaginable of this do-  
 ctrine, as both false, and of a pernicious ten-  
 dency. He asserts, that “ the double sanction  
 “ of rewards and punishments in a future state  
 “ was, in fact, invented by men. It appears  
 “ to be so by the evident marks of humanity that  
 “ characterise it. — That these notions favour  
 “ more of the human passions, than of justice  
 “ or prudence.—That the vulgar heathens be-  
 “ lieved their *Jupiter* liable to so many human  
 “ passions, that they might easily believe him  
 “ liable in his government of mankind, to those  
 “ of love and hatred, of anger and vengeance.  
 “ — That the *Jews* entertained such unworthy  
 “ notions of God, and their system contained  
 “ such instances of partiality in love and hatred,  
 “ of furious anger, and unrelenting vengeance,  
 “ in a long series of arbitrary judgments, that  
 “ they would be ready to receive this heathenish

\* Vol. V. p. 516.

LETTER " doctrine of his arbitrary and cruel proceed-  
 XVI. " ings hereafter.—That accordingly this do-  
 " ctine was in vogue in the Church of *Moses*,  
 " when that of *Jesus* began.—And that it  
 " made a part of the *original Christian revela-*  
 " *tion* \*."—This doctrine he frequently repre-  
 sents as not only of human invention, but as ab-  
 surd and impious, and even as *blasphemous*; and  
 he asserts, that it is *impossible to reconcile it to the*  
*divine attributes* †. And after having said that  
 the *Jews* " blended together at once in the  
 " moral character of God, injustice, cruelty,  
 " and partiality, he adds, that the moral cha-  
 " racter imputed to the Supreme Being by the  
 " Christian theology, differs little from that im-  
 " puted to him by the *Jewish*." Yea, he makes  
 it the worse of the two.—That " sudden and  
 " violent anger are imputed to him in the one  
 " system, slow and silent revenge in the other.  
 " That he is represented by the latter as waiting  
 " to punish hereafter with unrelenting vengeance  
 " and eternal torments, when it is too late to  
 " terrify, because it is too late to reform ‡." Thus he represents that which he would have pass for an essential article of the original Christian revelation, as giving a worse idea of God than the *Jewish* revelation, which yet he pretends makes such a representation of the Deity as is worse than atheism.

I shall now examine what he has offered to make good so heavy and injurious a charge.

\* Vol. V. p. 515, 516. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ib.* p. 532, 533.

Some of his arguments are designed, if they <sup>LETTER</sup> prove any thing at all, to bear against future re- <sup>XVI.</sup> wards and punishments in general; and some are particularly levelled against the Christian doctrine of future rewards and punishments.

As to the former, some notice has been already taken of what he had urged to invalidate the belief of a future state of retributions. I shall not repeat what has been offered above in the eighth Letter to this purpose, but shall proceed to mention some things, which I had no occasion there to insist upon, as they make a part of the argument, as he has managed it, against the Christian revelation.

He charges those who assert, as Dr. *Clarke* has done, that “future retributions are necessary to  
 “set the present disorders and inequalities right,  
 “and to justify, upon the whole, the scheme  
 “of providence,” as in effect maintaining, that  
 “God acts against his attributes, and the per-  
 “fections of his nature in one system, only to  
 “have a reason the more for acting agreeably to  
 “them in another ||.” He urges, that “it is pro-  
 “fane to insinuate, much more to affirm pe-  
 “remptorily, that the proceedings of God to-  
 “wards men in the present life are unjust; and  
 “that if that could be admitted, it would be ab-  
 “surd to admit that this may be set right, which  
 “means, if the words have any meaning, that this  
 “injustice must cease to be injustice on the re-  
 “ceived hypothesis of his proceedings towards  
 “man in another life.” And he argues, that

LETTER " omnipotence itself cannot cause that which  
 XVI. " has been done not to have been done \*." The  
 { force of this argument depends upon a gross mis-  
 representation of the sense of those whom he has  
 thought fit to oppose. No Christian divines  
 pretend, that God's proceedings towards men in  
 this present life are unjust. On the contrary;  
 they maintain, that it is just and wise in God,  
 and suitable to the nature of this state of trial  
 and discipline, to suffer things to go on as they  
 do in their present course; and that it is agree-  
 able to the order of things that a state of final  
 retributions should succeed. They are far from  
 thinking, that what is now injustice will in a  
 future state cease to be injustice: But they main-  
 tain, that that justice, the execution of which  
 is for very wise reasons delayed, shall be exer-  
 cised and displayed in the fittest season. That  
 that punishment of the wicked which is not for  
 the present inflicted, though designed, shall be  
 executed, when it is most proper it should be so:  
 And that reward of the righteous, which is not  
 as yet actually conferred, shall be conferred when  
 it is fittest it should be conferred, and when they  
 are best prepared for receiving it. They assert,  
 that the evils and sufferings, which good men  
 endure in this present state are perfectly consist-  
 ent with the divine justice, because they are either  
 sent as chastisements and corrections for their sins  
 and miscarriages, or as seasonable trials for the  
 exercise and improvement of their virtues, and to



discipline them for a better world; and that in a future state the trial shall be over, and their virtue fully rewarded, and they shall arrive to the true felicity and perfection of their nature: And on the other hand, that wicked persons are here often suffered to prosper, and have many advantages and benefits given them, to lead them to repentance, and to answer many wise ends of providence. And if they prove incorrigible to the methods of discipline which are here made use of, those punishments which were here deferred, shall be at length inflicted; and God's righteousness, and just detestation against sin, shall be awfully manifested and displayed.

LETTER  
XVI.

But it is especially against future punishments that he bends his force. He observes, that "the  
" heathen philosophers, even those of them  
" who assumed providence to be the most active  
" in directing the affairs of this world, were  
" unanimous in their opinion, that the Supreme Being was never angry, nor ever did  
" harm;" for which he cites a passage from *Tully's Offices*, lib. 3, *Num iratum timemus Jovem? At hoc quidem commune est omnium philosophorum — Nunquam nec irasci Deum, nec nocere* \*. It will be easily allowed, that anger strictly speaking, as it signifies a passionate emotion, such as is to be found in such imperfect creatures as we are, cannot be ascribed to God; but to deny that he is displeased or of-

\* Vol. V. p. 510.

LETTER  
XVI. fended with the sins of his creatures, which is all that is intended when anger is ascribed to him in the sacred writings, is really to strike at the foundations of all religion, and under pretence of honourable thoughts of God, to banish the fear of a Deity out of the world. It was a maxim of the *Epicureans* concerning the divine nature,

*Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira.*

And their design in it was to deny the providence of God, and to represent him as absolutely unconcerned about the actions of men, so as neither to reward the good, nor to punish evil-doers. And this, if it holdeth at all, will equally hold against God's punishing the wicked in this life, and in the next. And it looks as if this was our author's intention. He urges, that "neither reason nor experience will shew us, in the Author of nature, an angry, revengeful judge, or bloody executioner †." But to miscall things does not alter their nature. It is easy to throw a hard name, and to call justice vengeance and cruelty: But no argument can be drawn from this to prove, that that which is one of the most glorious perfections, and inseparable from the wise and righteous Governor of the world, ought to pass for the worst of characters. If the Supreme Being be not utterly indifferent to virtue and vice, to good and

† Vol. V. p. 209.

evil, to the happiness and misery of his crea-  
tures, it must be said that he approveth the one,  
and is displeased with the other; and in that  
case he will shew his approbation and displea-  
sure by suitable effects. What should we think  
of an earthly prince, that should not concern  
himself whether his laws be observed or not,  
and should suffer them to be transgressed with im-  
punity? And is this the idea we should form of the  
Supreme Lord of the universe? If this were the  
case, what could be expected but universal dis-  
order and confusion in the moral world? It is  
the same thing, as if all things were left to a  
wild chance without a Supreme Governor and  
Judge.

There is a very extraordinary way of arguing  
which this writer makes use of to set aside fu-  
ture punishments. He observes, that "to assume  
" that the divine providence towards mankind  
" in this world has one criterion, and in the  
" next another, would be extravagant \*." And  
therefore he mentions it as an absurdity in the  
Christian scheme, that "the proceedings of the  
" future state shall be the very reverse of the  
" present; for then every individual human  
" creature is to be tried; whereas here they are  
" only considered collectively, that the most se-  
" cret actions, nay, the very thoughts of the heart  
" will be laid open, and sentence will be pro-  
" nounced accordingly †." The plain meaning  
of this is, that the individuals of mankind shall

\* Vol. V. p. 498.

† *Ib.* p. 494.

LETTER not be obnoxious to any punishment from God  
 XVI. either in this world, or in the next; and consequently that there shall be no exercise of divine justice here or hereafter. For he himself declares, that "justice requires, that rewards and " punishments should be measured out in various " degrees, according to the various circumstances of particular cases, and in proportion " to them." He has endeavoured to turn that into an argument against the Christian account of a future judgment, which is really its glory, and a great proof of its truth, *viz.* that men's secret actions, and even the thoughts of their hearts, shall then be laid open. These are things that lie quite out of the reach of human judicatories, and yet upon these it is that the morality of actions doth properly depend. If therefore there be no account to be given of them here or hereafter, men's best or worst actions or dispositions will go unrewarded or unpunished, which is the highest absurdity, supposing there is a Supreme moral Governor and Judge. But according to the account given us in the Gospel, *the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed*, the hidden springs shall be enquired into, from whence good and evil actions flow, men shall be shewn in their true characters, no real good action shall pass unrewarded or evil one unpunished; than which nothing can possibly have a greater influence to engage us to exercise a constant care over our inward temper, and our outward conduct.

Another



Another argument he makes use of, which, LETTER  
XVI.  
as far as it is of any force, bears against future punishments in general. It is this; That “re-  
“paration and terror are objects essential to the  
“constitution of human justice. But what  
“does that justice require, if it may be called  
“justice, when it tends neither to reparation,  
“nor terror \*?” He acknowledges what some  
engaged in the same cause have thought fit to  
deny, that “to reform offenders is not the sole  
“nor the principal end of punishment. Those  
“that are capital must have some other. The  
“criminal is executed for the sake of others,  
“and that he may do some good by the terror  
“of his death. The prince that should punish  
“without regard to reparation or terror, could  
“have no motive to punish but the pleasure of  
“punishing; which no spirit but that of anger,  
“vengeance, or cruelty, can inspire.” He asks  
“therefore, What effects can punishments have,  
“when the system of human government is at  
“an end, the state of probation is over, when  
“there is no farther means for reformation  
“of the wicked, nor reparation to the in-  
“jured by those who injured them, and when  
“the eternal lots of all mankind are cast, and  
“terror is of no farther use †?” But it is to be  
considered, that the terror of that future pu-  
nishment is of great use in this present state.  
The proper design of the threatenings of future  
punishment, is not to inflict the punishment,  
but to prevent the wickedness, and thereby to

\* Vol. V. p. 494, 495. † *Ib.* p. 507, 508.

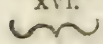
LETTER prevent the punishment. But when once those  
 XVI. threatenings are denounced, justice and truth, and the majesty of the Supreme Ruler, require that they should be ordinarily executed upon those who, notwithstanding those threatenings, persist in their wicked courses. For if it were laid down as a principle, that though these threatenings were denounced, justice or goodness would not suffer them to be executed, it would be the same thing as if there were no threatenings at all; since they would in that case answer no purpose, and could not be said to be so much as in *terrorem*. But besides the necessity there is that such punishments should be threatened here for the sake of preserving order, and restraining wickedness among mankind, even in this present state, and consequently, that they should be executed hereafter upon those that have incurred the threatened penalties, of what use the execution of them may be to other orders of beings in a future state, to inspire an abhorrence of sin, and a fear of the divine majesty, and how far the influence of them may extend, no man can take upon him to determine. The Scripture intimates as if the future judgments were to be transacted in a most solemn manner, in the view not merely of the whole human race, but of other orders of intelligent beings. Mention is often made of great numbers of angels as present on that occasion. Those punishments may therefore be of very extensive use, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, for promoting the general good,  
 for

for displaying the evil of sin, and vindicating the majesty of the divine laws and government, and may serve as solemn warnings to the intellectual creation. God takes no pleasure in their torments as such, but in answering the great ends of his governments, in taking the properest methods to promote the good of the whole, in the exercise and display of his own infinite righteousness and purity, in separating the just from the unjust, and putting a visible eternal discrimination between the obstinate opposers of his authority and goodness, and those who loved and served him in sincerity.

LETTER  
XVI.

When this writer reckoneth *reparation* among the ends of punishment, he seemeth by reparation to mean only the repairing the injuries done by one creature to another; as if all the malignity and demerit of sin consisted only in its being a wrong done to our fellow-creatures; and as if it were not to be considered or punished at all as an offence against the divine majesty, and a violation of the laws of the supreme universal Lord. But this is a great mistake. Sin is indeed a great evil considered as an offence committed against our fellow-creatures, and against the true dignity, perfection, and happiness, of our own natures, and a counteracting the proper end and order of our beings; but the principal part of its malignity is its being an insurrection against the majesty and authority of the great Lord of the universe, to whom we owe all possible subjection and obe-

LETTER  
XVI.


 dience, an opposing our wills and appetites to the will and law of the Supreme, the basest ingratitude to his infinite goodness, a casting an indignity on his adorable perfections, and on the wisdom and righteousness of his government, and therefore a breach of universal order. This is what renders sin principally criminal and odious; and what we ought to have a chief regard to in our humble confessions, or else we are not true penitents. And as it is in this that its malignity chiefly consisteth, and as God would have us abhor it principally on this account, so it is on this account especially that he punisheth it: For he judgeth of things as they really are. If the greatest evil of sin consisteth in its being an offence committed against the divine majesty, a wilful transgression of his known laws, and an opposition to his authority and goodness, if the more there is of this in any sin the more heinous its guilt must be acknowledged to be, if this carrieth an infinitely greater, a more monstrous malignity in it than its being merely an offence against creatures like ourselves, it is contrary to all the dictates of reason and good sense to suppose that the most wise and righteous Governor of the world in punishing sin hath not principally a regard to that on the account of which it principally deserveth punishment. It is true that God cannot be really hurt by our sins and vices, nor beatified by our obedience and our virtues. But this is only owing to the transcendent excellency of his



his own most perfect nature. And it would be a strange thing to make the infinite perfection of his nature a reason why his creatures should be allowed to transgress his laws with impunity. On the contrary, the greater the excellency of his nature is, the greater is the evil of sin as committed against his infinite majesty; and that very perfection of his nature makes it impossible for him not to hate all moral evil. For it is manifest that an eternal love of order, purity, and righteousness, is necessarily included in infinite perfection. And how shall he shew his just abhorrence of sin, and aversion to the breach of moral order, but by the marks and effects of his displeasure against it, that is, by punishing obstinate presumptuous transgressors.

Our author tells us, that “future punishments  
“ were not believed by the philosophers, not  
“ even by *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, though they  
“ talked of them \*.” And that at the coming  
“ of our Saviour, they were generally disre-  
“ garded, even by the vulgar.”† If this were so,  
it became the more necessary to renew the dis-  
covery, and set it in a clearer and stronger light,  
since it was of vast importance to mankind to  
believe it. By his own acknowledgement, the  
ablest philosophers and legislators thought so.  
And he himself frequently owns the great use-  
fulness of this doctrine. And its usefulness is,  
as I have before observed, in conjunction with

• Vol. V. p. 513.

4

other

4. The various fishes, and the same again, 34 volumes, a 1000 pages in each of 12 volumes. The same 1000 pages of each of the 12 volumes.

We have a great deal of work to do, but we will do it.

LETTER other considerations, no small argument of its  
 XVI. truth.

Having considered what he hath offered with relation to future rewards and punishments in general, I shall now examine the particular objections he hath urged against the accounts given of them in the Christian revelation.

He observes, that “ had the doctrine of future rewards and punishments been more general, and less descriptive ; had future punishments been represented like the rewards, to be simply such as eye never saw, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man could conceive, it might have been maintained in credit, and have had an universal and real influence, perhaps to the great advantage of religion. But besides the absurdity of supposing that God inflicts eternal punishments on his creatures, which would render their non-existence infinitely preferable to their existence on the whole ;” he apprehends, that “ an air of ridicule has been cast on this doctrine by preserving all the idle tales and burlesque images, which were propagated in those days.” He represents it as “ nearly resembling the *mythologia de inferis*, which has been so often laughed at\*.” As to the account given us in the Gospel of the future reward, it is incomparably noble and excellent, and not quite so general as he represents it, but such as is fitted to raise in us the highest ideas of the felicity and

\* Vol. V. p. 542.

perfection to which good men shall be raised in the heavenly world. The descriptions there set before us of future punishments are general, but very expressive. And the burlesque images he speaks of are awful and striking representations, designed and fitted to convey images of terror, but not mixed with any trifling or ridiculous circumstances, like the poetical tales and fables he refers to.

LETTER  
XVI.

But what he seems to lay a principal stress upon for exposing the Christian doctrine of future rewards and punishments, is this: That “justice requires  
“most certainly that rewards and punishments  
“should be measured out in every particular  
“case, in proportion to the merit and demerit  
“of each individual. But instead of this, it is  
“assured, that the righteous and the wicked  
“are transported into heaven, or plunged into  
“hell, without any distinction of the particu-  
“lar cases which have been so solemnly deter-  
“mined, and without any proportion observed  
“between the various degrees of merit and de-  
“merit in the application of those rewards  
“and punishments \*.” And in all that he offers in the latter part of the sixty-eighth of his Fragments and Essays, he proceeds upon this supposition, that “the greatest and least degree of  
“virtue shall be rewarded, and the greatest  
“and least degree of vice punished alike:” And that it is “arbitrary and tyrannical to make no  
“distinction of persons in dissimilar cases †.”

\* Vol. V. p. 495.

† *Ib.* p. 496.

LETTER And again he urges, that “ the hypothesis of  
 XVI. “ of all being saved alike, or damned in the  
 “ lump, tends to destroy little by little, all those  
 “ impressions which the belief of a future state  
 “ is so usefully designed to give \*.”

All that his Lordship here offers depends upon a great misapprehension, or a wilful misrepresentation of the Christian doctrine on this head. If men were to be rewarded and punished hereafter only collectively, and no regard had to individuals, which our author would persuade us is the method of God’s proceeding towards mankind in this present state, then it might be admitted that men are saved and damned only *in the lump*, as he is pleased to express it. But this is not the Scripture representation of God’s proceedings in a future state. We are there most expressly assured, that the case of every individual shall be examined and judged. It is thus that our Lord, who is to be our Judge, represents it : He tells us, that he will *come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and then shall he reward every man according to his works*, Matt. xvi. 27. St. Paul expressly declares, that *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom. ii. 6. That *every one of us shall give an account of himself to God*, Rom. xiv. 12. That *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it*

\* Vol. V. p. 503.



*be good or bad, 2 Cor. v. 10. That every man's work shall be tried, and made manifest, 1 Cor. iii. 13. In speaking of the respective duties of masters and servants, he lets them know, that the meanest shall not be neglected, but shall receive a proper reward: That whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free: But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons, Eph. vi. 8, 9. Col. iii. 25. St. Peter assureth us, that God without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, 1 Pet. i. 17. Christ is introduced as declaring, I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works, Rev. ii. 23. And in the description of the future judgment, Rev. xx. 12. to shew the exactness of that judgment, it is said, that the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And it is repeated again, ver. 13. they were judged every man according to their works.*

From these several passages compared together it appears with the utmost evidence, that according to the whole tenor of the New Testament, in the dispensing future retributions, *the rewards and punishments shall be measured out in every particular case, in proportion to the merit and demerit of each individual*, which our author saith is what justice requires. It is therefore manifest, that what is there said concerning  
that

LETTER  
XVI.

LETTER  
XVI.

that future state of rewards and punishments, must be understood in a consistency with the making an exact distribution according to particular cases and circumstances. And that the general representations there made of heaven as a state of future happiness to the righteous, and of hell as a state of future punishment to the wicked, must be so taken and explained as to comport with the different degrees of rewards and punishments to the one and to the other; and not as if all good men were to be raised to the same degree of future glory and happiness; and all bad men to be punished with the same degree of misery; since it is so frequently and expressly declared, that God will then, without respect of persons, render to every man according to his deeds; and that every man shall then receive according to what he hath done in the body. The general descriptions of that future glory are indeed sublime and noble, and represent it in a most attractive view. And it was proper it should be so. They set before us a happiness beyond imagination great and glorious, the more effectually to animate us to a patient continuance in well-doing. And it is signified, that it is of such a nature, so transcendently great and excellent, as vastly to exceed what any of the human race could in strictness of justice have deserved. For the obedience of the best of men is very imperfect, and mixed with many defects; and therefore that eternal life and happiness is represented as the *gift of God*

*through Jesus Christ.* That reward is the effect of free sovereign grace and goodness. And therefore none can find fault if the glory and happiness which shall be conferred upon good men hereafter be above what they could be said to have strictly merited. But though the very lowest degree of reward and happiness in that future state shall be far superior to what the best of men could have pretended to have challenged as in strictness of justice due to his merits, yet God shall so order it in his infinite wisdom and righteousness, that there shall be an admirable proportion observed in giving different degrees of glory, according to the different proficiencies men had made in real goodness during their state of trial. Nothing can be clearer to this purpose than our Saviour's determination in the parable of the pounds, *Luke xix. 12, 20.* where he represents higher honours and rewards conferred upon some than upon others, according to their different degrees of usefulness, and the different improvements they had made of what was committed to them. And in the blessings he pronounceth upon those that are persecuted for righteousness sake, he plainly intimates, that they should be distinguished with a higher reward in heaven than many others, in proportion to their greater sufferings and services. And in general he declares, that in his *father's house are many mansions*; which supposes that there shall be different abodes provided for good men in that future world, into which they shall  
be

LETTER  
XVI.

LETTER

XVI.

be distributed, each of them happy in their several ways, and each contented with the lot assigned them. But no-where are we particularly told, what shall be the lowest degree of happiness and reward which shall be conferred on the lowest degrees of real virtue and righteousness, nor would such a discovery be of any use to mankind, or answer any valuable purpose.

As to future punishments, in the inflicting of these the strictest regard shall be had to the rules of justice, so that no man shall be punished beyond his demerits. This incontestably follows from the frequent declarations that are made, and which have been already produced, that God will render to every man according to his deeds, without respect of persons. But besides these general declarations, there are several passages of Scripture which are designed to shew, that there shall be a remarkable difference made between some bad men and others in the punishments inflicted on them; and that in the inflicting these punishments a regard shall be had to the different aggravations of their crimes. This is what our Lord plainly signifies, when he declares with great solemnity, that it *shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment*, that is, for the most profligate parts of the heathen world, than for those that obstinately rejected and abused the Gospel offers of mercy and salvation, and who go on in an obstinate course of presumptuous sin and disobedience, in opposition to the clearest light,  
and





LETTER <sup>XVI.</sup> punishment. Such declarations could answer no good end, and would probably be abused. It is more wisely done to leave that matter in general expressions; at the same time assuring us, that every man shall be punished in a strict proportion to the circumstances of his crime.

A due consideration of this will in a great measure obviate the principal objections this author hath urged against the eternal duration of that future punishment, which depend principally upon this supposition, that all shall be alike subjected to the most extreme degree of torment and misery, and so shall continue for ever: Whereas if it be considered, that there shall be a vast and amazing difference made between some and others, in that future world; that the state of some shall be tolerable compared with that of others; and that every man's case shall be considered, and his condition wisely and exactly proportioned to what he had deserved; on this supposition, whatever the duration of it is supposed to be, it is still just.

Here it will not be improper to take notice of a remarkable passage of this writer in relation to this present subject. He says, “ he could easily  
 “ persuade himself, that the mercy of God pardons the offenders who amend, consistently  
 “ with his justice; for else, as all men offend,  
 “ all men would be punished; and that his  
 “ goodness may carry on the work his mercy  
 “ has begun, and place such as are the objects  
 “ of both in a state, where they will be exempt  
 “ perhaps

“ perhaps eternally from all natural, and as much LETTER  
 “ as finite creatures can be, from all moral evil. XVI.  
 “ He could persuade himself, that they who  
 “ are the objects of neither, and are not there-  
 “ fore pardoned, remain, if they do remain,  
 “ excluded from the happiness of the others,  
 “ and reduced to a forlorn state. Some such  
 “ hypothesis, where no certainty is to be had, I  
 “ could admit, says he, as probable, because it  
 “ contradicts none of the divine attributes, sets  
 “ none of them at variance, nor breaks their  
 “ harmony.” Here he supposes it to be a prob-  
 able hypothesis, and perfectly consistent with  
 the divine attributes, not only that some men  
 who are the proper objects of the divine good-  
 ness and mercy, may continue eternally in a  
 happy state exempt from all evil ; but that others  
 who by their conduct have rendered themselves  
 not the proper objects of the divine mercy, may  
 be debarred from pardon, and may remain,  
 whilst they do remain, and consequently may  
 remain eternally, supposing them to continue  
 in eternal existence, excluded from that happi-  
 ness which the others enjoy, and reduced to a  
 forlorn state. If therefore we be assured by a  
 well-attested revelation, that this shall really be  
 the case, he ought not to object against it.

But he urges, that “ it is absurd to suppose, that  
 “ our state of probation ends with this present  
 “ life, and that judgment will be determined  
 “ by what we have done in this state.—And  
 “ that a virtue or wickedness of fifty or sixty  
 S F 2 “ years,

LETTER " years, should be rewarded with eternal hap-  
 XVI. " piness, or punished with eternal misery \*."

The objection that is drawn from the disproportion there is between the duration of the state of trial, and the eternity that is to succeed it, might be made, whatever we suppose the continuance of the time of trial to be. But the shortness of this state of trial furnisheth a powerful consideration to engage us to improve it. And very probably, if it were ordinarily much longer than it is, the condition of mankind might be worse in the present corrupt state of the human nature than it now is; as the length of men's lives before the flood probably contributed to the wickedness that so much abounded. The argument therefore, as far as there is any weight in it, holdeth against the supposing any state of trial at all, of whatever continuance. But do we know enough of the measures and designs of the divine government, to be able to pronounce, that it may not be worthy of God as the Supreme Governor of the world, to appoint to his reasonable creatures a state of trial and discipline, and to deal with them according to their behaviour in such a state, and let them know, that if they obstinately persist in their rebellion and disobedience, he will at length shut up his grace from them, and they shall be excluded from that glory and felicity, with which he would have bountifully rewarded their perseverance in a course of piety and vir-

\* Vol. V. p. 493, 504, 505.



tue during the time of trial allotted them? It <sup>LETTER</sup>  
 may be left to impartial reason, whether this <sup>XVI.</sup>  
 constitution would not be more wisely ordained,  
 and more likely to promote the interests of vir-  
 tue and good order in the world, and to repress  
 vice and wickedness, than to set no bounds at  
 all to the offers of his mercy, and to assure them,  
 that let them behave never so wickedly and pre-  
 sumptuously, and abuse and reject all the me-  
 thods of his grace, yet still after they leave this  
 world, and at any other time throughout eter-  
 nity, whenever they repent, they shall be for-  
 given, and even restored to favour, and raised  
 to glory and felicity? Would this be a rule of  
 government worthy of the divine wisdom, or  
 fit to be published throughout the whole intel-  
 lectual world?

As reason leads us to conclude, that it is neces-  
 sary for answering the great ends of moral go-  
 vernment, that punishments should be de-  
 nounced against the obstinate transgressors of  
 the divine laws, so it may be justly doubted  
 whether to creatures designed for an immortal  
 existence, the threatening of none but tempo-  
 rary punishments would be sufficient; especially  
 if they apprehended, that they should outlive  
 those punishments for infinite ages in bliss and  
 glory. It certainly becometh us in our enqui-  
 ries concerning such matters as these, to pro-  
 ceed with great modesty; since we cannot pre-  
 tend of ourselves to be proper judges of what  
 the governing wisdom and righteousness of the

LETTER XVI. Supreme Lord of the universe doth require, and what is most worthy of God, and most for the good of the whole, which is of far greater importance than the interests of particular beings.

To consider the sentence, which shall pass upon bad men at the great day of judgment, as final and irreversible; and that after this there shall be no fresh offers of grace and mercy; but they shall continue under the effects of that sentence during the whole of their existence, is certainly a consideration of the highest moment, and must needs have a wonderful weight to engage us to make the best use of the present state of trial allotted us, and to lay hold on the offers of salvation that are now made to us upon the reasonable terms of the new covenant. Whereas if we had reason to apprehend, that there were to be new states of trial, new seasons and offers of grace, after the general judgment, it would greatly weaken the influence of the motives drawn from the threatenings of future punishment. Nor is there any thing in this constitution, which can be proved to be inconsistent with the wisdom, justice, and equity, of the divine government. For as to the exclusion from the heavenly felicity, which shall be a considerable part of that future punishment, there is no reasonable ground for expecting, that those who now reject the divine grace and mercy should ever be admitted to that transcendent bliss and glory, which God hath been pleased

pleased of his own free and rich goodness to  
 promise to the righteous, and which no man  
 could pretend to challenge as in strictness of  
 justice due to him. Nor is it any impeachment  
 of the divine wisdom and goodness to leave  
 obstinate sinners during the whole course of  
 their existence under that part of the punishment  
 which ariseth from the stinging reflections of  
 their own guilty consciences, or from the na-  
 tural effects of their wickedness and bad temper  
 of mind. And whatever farther punishments  
 there may be more directly and immediately in-  
 flicted by the divine hand, we may be sure they  
 shall be in such measures and proportions to  
 each individual, as never to exceed the demerit  
 of their crimes.

What has been said may help us to judge of  
 the strange representation this author is pleased  
 to make of the Scripture doctrine of future pu-  
 nishments: That “ such a proceeding can be  
 “ ascribed to no principle, but to the revenge  
 “ of a being, who punishes to the full extent  
 “ of his power, and merely for the pleasure of  
 “ punishing, and without any regard to justice,  
 “ creatures who did not offend him, merely  
 “ for the pleasure of offending him, creatures  
 “ who had free will, and made wrong elections,  
 “ creatures who might plead in mitigation of  
 “ their punishments, their frailties, their pas-  
 “ sions, the imperfections of their natures, and  
 “ the numerous temptations to which they

LETTER  
 XVI.

LETTER "flood exposed \*." This representation is un-  
 XVI. just in every article. The tendency of it is  
 plainly this; to apologize for sin, and to diminish the evil of it. And what good can be proposed by this is hard to say. Nothing can be more contrary to the honour of God, to the good of mankind, to the peace and order of the moral world, than to endeavour to make men entertain slight thoughts of the evil of sin. To what purpose is it to say, that sinners do not offend God merely for the pleasure of offending him? If they do it for the pleasure of gratifying their own corrupt inclinations and appetites, which they oppose and prefer to the most wise and holy will and law of the sovereign Lord of the universe, is not this a very heinous guilt? Their having free-will, and making wrong elections, when it was in their choice to have done otherwise, though mentioned here in mitigation of their guilt, is a great aggravation of their crime, and an abuse of their reason and liberty, which are amongst the noblest gifts of God. To plead passions and temptations, is an excuse, which, if admitted, may serve to apologize for the greatest crimes. But they are not allowed by any wise human judicatories as a reason for exempting those that transgress the laws from the penalties to which their transgressions had exposed them. And *Lord Falkland* himself has elsewhere very properly observed, that those very persons who



pretend, that inclinations cannot be restrained, and who speak most of the power of the appetites and passions, can resist and controul them, when any evident interest, or contrary inclination, leads them to do so \*. And as to any transgressions that may properly be called frailties and infirmities, and which have little of the will in them, the wise and just Ruler of the world will no doubt make all the allowances that equity can demand.

LETTER  
XV.

Upon the whole, the Christian doctrine of future rewards and punishments is so far from furnishing a just objection against the divine original of the Gospel-revelation, that, if rightly considered, it yieldeth a noble evidence of its usefulness and truth. It is scarce possible to form an idea of any thing more solemn and affecting, and better fitted to make a strong impression on the human mind, than the representation given in the New Testament of the future judgment. The whole human race convened before the sovereign universal Judge, innumerable myriads of holy angels attending, the judicial process carried on with the greatest solemnity, a strict and impartial enquiry made, the most hidden actions brought to light, and the very secrets of the heart laid open, and all followed by eternal retributions. It seemeth plain from our Saviour's manner of representing things, that he regarded it as a matter of great

\* See his Letters on the Study and Use of History, Let. III. Sect. 1.

importance,

LETTER importance, that sinners should have no hope  
 XVI. or expectation given them of obtaining mercy  
 and salvation, if they persisted to the end of  
 this present life in a course of impenitence, pre-  
 sumptuous sin, and disobedience. He no-where  
 giveth the least intimation, that the punishment  
 of the wicked in a future state shall have an end.  
 On the contrary, he still speaketh of it in terms  
 which according to the natural import of the  
 expressions seem to signify that it shall be of a  
 perpetual duration, without adding any thing to  
 qualify those expressions. And for any persons  
 to flatter themselves, that God may in his abso-  
 lute sovereignty dispense with the rigor of his  
 threatenings, and to depend upon such an ex-  
 pectation, would be an extreme folly, when the  
 plain tenor of the revelation seems to go the  
 other way.

I have now finished the design I had in view,  
 which was to defend natural and revealed reli-  
 gion against the attacks made upon both by this  
 very confident and assuming author. In the  
 execution of this design I have principally con-  
 fined myself to the reasoning part of his Lord-  
 ship's works as far as religion is concerned, and  
 have not willingly overlooked any thing that  
 had the appearance of argument. But I have  
 not attempted to follow him in several of those  
 excursions which seem to have been principally  
 intended to shew the variety of his reading, of  
 which it must be owned there is a great appear-

ance, though I cannot say he has given many LETTER  
XVI. proofs of his having maturely digested it. Several things there are in his scheme of metaphysics, and in the account he has given of the sentiments of the antient philosophers, which might justly be animadverted upon, though it will not be denied, that some of his observations on these heads are just and curious. But as a distinct examination of them would have very much enlarged this work, which is already longer than I at first intended, or than I would have wished it to be, I have chosen to omit them: For the same reason I have taken no particular notice of the reflections he has occasionally cast upon the antient fathers of the Christian Church, and upon the body of the primitive Christians, of whom he has made a most injurious representation, and has in effect justified the persecutions raised by the heathens against them. He tells us, that “ their clergy were, under pretence of religion, a very lawless tribe.— “ That they broke the laws in the most public “ manner, and instigated others to break them, “ by popular insurrections against the authority “ of magistrates, and by tumults and riots, in “ which they insulted the established religion of “ the empire.—And he believes, the list of “ the martyrs consisted more of those who suffered for breaking the peace, than of those “ who suffered quietly for the sake of their religion \*.” Such is the charge he has thought

\* Vol. IV. p. 434.

LETTER <sup>XVI.</sup> fit to bring against a worthy and peaceable body of men, for so the primitive Christians generally were, whose innocent and virtuous behaviour has been acknowledged by some of their Pagan adversaries themselves.

You will observe, that I have, for the most part, except where the argument led to it, passed over the bitter sarcasm he so frequently throws out against the Christian divines. They have the honour to be reviled and insulted in every work that is designed against revealed religion. But it must be owned, that his Lordship has in obloquy and reproach far exceeded all that have gone before him. He has found out what the world did not know before, that the divines are in a formed alliance and confederacy with the Atheists against God and his providence, and that the latter are not such dangerous enemies to religion as the former.

I have not thought myself obliged to take any distinct notice of the long account he has given in his fourth Essay of the incroachments of the ecclesiastical upon the civil power, and the several steps by which those incroachments were carried on, especially in the times of the papal usurpation. He has advanced little on those heads that can be called new, or which had not been observed by others before him. And we have his Lordship's own acknowledgement frequently repeated, that this is by no means chargeable on true original Christianity. It would therefore be very disingenuous to turn  
that



that to the disadvantage of the religion of *Jefus*, which has been only owing to a gross abuse and corruption of it, a corruption which was plainly foretold in the sacred writings, at a time when it was impossible for any human sagacity to foresee it. LETTER  
XVI.

He frequently exclaims against artificial theology, and complains of the profane mixtures which have been brought into the Christian religion by the subtilties of a vain philosophy, and by idle traditions. It must be acknowledged, that there has often been too much ground for such complaints. And to endeavour to separate pure uncorrupted Christianity as taught by Christ and his apostles from debasing mixtures, and the corrupt additions that have been made to it, is undoubtedly a noble and useful work, and when properly performed, is doing a real service to Christianity, and tendeth to establish the credit of it, and to promote its sacred interests. But such writers as Lord *Bolingbroke* are certainly the unfittest persons in the world to undertake it.

*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis  
Tempus eget*

Instead of promoting the good work of reformation, and of contributing to restore religion in its primitive purity, they bring a disgrace upon those who would in good earnest attempt it, and furnish the patrons of those corruptions

LETTER with a plausible pretence for reproaching and  
 XVI. misrepresenting such persons as having an ill intention against Christianity itself, and as serving the cause of Deists and Infidels.

His Lordship charges the mischiefs which have befallen the Christian Church as having been chiefly owing to this: That “ the pure word of God neither is nor has been the sole criterion of orthodoxy \*.” He asserts, that “ no human authority can supply or alter, much less improve, what the Son of God came on earth to reveal †.” He says, that “ divines should return to the Gospel, as philosophers have returned to Nature, and presume to dogmatize no farther than the plain import of it will justify ‡.” And he recommends it as the most effectual way to remove the scandals arising from the dissensions among Christians, that the Christian divines “ should be content to explain what they understand, to adore what they understand not, and to leave in mystery all that Christ and his apostles have left so ||.”

These advices, considered in themselves, might have been thought to proceed from a good and friendly intention. But every thing is suspected that comes from such a hand. Yet a real friend to Christianity will know how to make a proper use of admonitions and reproofs, even when given by an enemy.

\* Vol. IV. p. 448.  
 || *Ib.* p. 629.

† *Ib.* p. 617,

‡ *Ib.* p. 449.

I shall conclude with this observation, That <sup>LETTER</sup> the religion of *Jesus*, as delivered in the New <sup>XVI.</sup> Testament in its original purity and simplicity, will be ever able to stand its ground against all the assaults of the most subtil and most malicious adversaries. It hath a dignity and excellency in it, which hath often extorted favourable acknowledgements even from those who have appeared to be strongly prejudiced against it, of which we have a remarkable instance in the late Lord *Bolingbroke*. And I am persuaded, that the more any thinking man considereth it with a free and unprejudiced mind, the more he will admire it, and will be the more convinced of its truth and excellency, and of its divine original. You will, I doubt not, join with me in earnest prayer to God, that this holy religion may be more universally diffused, that it may be made known to those who know it not, and that where it is known and professed it may have more of the happy effects which it is so well fitted to produce.

*I am,*

*Reverend and dear Sir,*

*Most sincerely and affectionately yours,*

JOHN IELAND.



THE  
CONCLUSION.  
IN AN  
ADDRESS  
TO

DEISTS and PROFESSED CHRISTIANS.

HAVING endeavoured to give as clear a general view as I was able of the principal Deistical Writers of the last and present age, and having made large and particular remarks on the two most noted authors who have appeared of late among us in that cause, I shall now, as a conclusion of the whole work, take the liberty to address myself, both to those that take upon them the character of Deists and Free-thinkers, and who reject the Christian revelation, and to those who are honoured with the name of Christians, and who profess to receive the religion of *Jesus* as of divine authority.

The former may be ranked principally into two sorts. They are either such as taking it for granted, that Christianity has been proved to be  
an



an imposition on mankind, reject it at a venture, without being able to assign a reason for rejecting it, or at most take up with some slight objections, and content themselves with general clamours of priestcraft and imposture, without giving themselves the trouble of making a distinct enquiry into the nature of the religion itself, or examining its proofs and evidences; or, they are such as pretend to reject Christianity, because upon a due examination and enquiry, they have found it to be destitute of sufficient proof, and have discovered in it the marks of falshood and imposture, which convince them that it cannot be of divine original. There is reason to apprehend, that the greater part of those among us who pass under the name of Deists, come under the former of these characters. But the conduct of such persons is so manifestly absurd as to admit of no excuse. For what pretence have they to glory in the title of Free-thinkers, who will not be at the pains to think closely and seriously at all, even in matters of the highest consequence? There are few therefore who are willing to own that this is their case. Whether they have really given themselves the trouble of a free and diligent examination and enquiry or not, they would be thought to have done so, and not to have rejected the Christian revelation without having good reasons for their unbelief. It is therefore to such persons that I would now address myself.

Of this sort professedly are those that have appeared among us under the character of Deistical Writers. They have made a shew of attacking Christianity in a way of reason and argument. But upon the view which hath been taken of them, it may, I think, be safely declared, that whatever they have offered that had the face of argument, hath been solidly confuted, the evidences of Christianity have been placed in a fair and consistent light, and their objections against it have been shewn to be vain and insufficient. Though there never were writers more confident and assuming, or who have expressed a greater admiration of themselves, and contempt of others, it hath been shewn that, taking them generally, they have had little to support such glorious pretences: That no writers ever acted a part more unfair and disingenuous: That though they have set up for advocates of natural religion in opposition to revealed, yet many of them have endeavoured to subvert the main articles even of natural religion, and have used arguments which bear equally against all religion, and tend to banish it out of the world: That they have often put on a show of great regard for genuine original Christianity, whilst at the same time they have used their utmost efforts to destroy its evidences, and subvert its authority: That instead of representing the Christian religion fairly as it is, they have had recourse to misrepresentation and abuse, and have treated the  
holy

holy Scriptures in a manner which would not be borne, if put in practice against any other antient writings of the least reputation, and which is indeed inconsistent with all the rules of candour and decency: That with regard to the extraordinary facts by which Christianity is attested, they have advanced principles which would be accounted perfectly ridiculous if applied to any other facts, and which really tend to destroy all moral evidence, and the credit of all past facts whatsoever: And finally, that never were there writers more inconsistent with themselves, and with one another, or who have discovered more apparent signs of obstinate prepossession and prejudice. And should not all this naturally create a suspicion of a cause which stands in need of such managements, and of writers who have been obliged to have recourse to arts so little reconcileable to truth and candour? And yet it is to be apprehended, that many of those who laugh at others for relying upon their teachers, are ready to resign themselves to their Deistical leaders, and to take their pretences and confident assertions, and even their jests and sarcasms, for arguments.

Many of the objections which have been produced with great pomp, and which have created some of the strongest prejudices against Christianity, are such as cannot be properly urged against it with any appearance of reason at all. Such are the objections drawn from the abuses and corruptions which have been introduced

to its original design, or from the ill conduct of many of its professors and ministers. For whilst the Christian religion as taught by Christ and his apostles, and delivered in the holy Scriptures, may be demonstrated to be of a most useful and admirable nature and tendency, whilst the proofs and evidences of it stand entire, and the truth of the facts whereby it was attested, is sufficiently established, the reason for embracing it still holds good: And to reject a religion in itself excellent, for abuses and corruptions, which many of those that make the objection acknowledge are not justly chargeable upon true original Christianity, is a conduct that cannot be justified, and is indeed contrary to the dictates of reason and good sense. The same observation may be made with regard to some other objections which have been frequently urged against the Christian revelation, as particularly that which is drawn from its not having been universally promulgated. For if the evidences which are brought to prove that Christianity is a true divine revelation, and that this revelation was really given, are good and valid, then its not having been made known to all mankind will never prove, that such a revelation was not given. And such a way of arguing in any other case would be counted impertinent. It is arguing from a thing, the reasons of which we do not know, against the truth and certainty of a thing that we do know, and of which we are able to bring sufficient proofs.

The



The only objections therefore or arguments, which can really be of weight against Christianity, are those which either tend to invalidate its proofs and evidences, and to shew that the divine attestations which were given to it are not to be depended upon, or which are drawn from the nature of the Revelation itself to shew that it is absurd and unworthy of God. And accordingly both these have been attempted. But whosoever will impartially consider the writings of the Deistical authors, and compare them with those of the advocates for Christianity, will find how little they have advanced on either of these heads that is really to the purpose. The attestations given to Christianity are of such an extraordinary nature, and carry in them such manifest proofs of a divine interposition, that few, if any, have ever owned the truth of those facts, and yet denied the divine original of the Christian revelation. Its adversaries therefore have chiefly bent their force to destroy the credit of the facts. But they have not been able to invalidate the arguments which have been brought to prove that those facts were really done: It hath been shewn, that the evidence produced for them is as great as could reasonably be expected and desired for any past facts whatsoever: That never was there any testimony, all things considered, more worthy of credit than that of the original witnesses to those facts: And that those accounts have been transmitted to us by a conveyance so sure and

uninterrupted as can hardly be paralleled in any other case. This has been evinced by a clear deduction of proofs, to which little has been opposed but conjectures and suspicions of fraud, and general clamours against moral evidence, and human testimony, without taking off the force of the proofs that have been brought on the other side.

As to the arguments urged against the Christian revelation from the nature of the revelation itself, these must relate either to its doctrines or laws. With respect to the laws of Christianity, it cannot reasonably be denied, that its moral precepts are pure and excellent, and have a manifest tendency to promote the practice of piety and virtue in its just extent, and the peace and good order of the world. And they are enforced with the most powerful and important motives that can possibly be conceived, and the best fitted to work upon the human nature.

When the moral precepts of Christianity could not be justly found fault with, a great clamour has been raised against its positive precepts and institutions. And yet it is capable of being proved, it hath been often clearly proved, that these positive institutions taken in their primitive purity, and according to their original design, are admirably fitted to promote the great ends of all religion, and to strengthen our obligations to a holy and a virtuous life. And this some of the most noted Deistical Writers have

have not been able to deny. And it has been lately fully acknowledged by Lord *Bolingbroke*.

The only objection therefore which properly remains is against the doctrines of Christianity. And before this objection can be properly brought to bear, two things are to be proved. The one is, that the doctrines objected against are doctrines of the true original Christian religion as taught by Christ and his apostles, and delivered in the holy Scriptures. The other is, that these doctrines, as there taught, are really absurd and contrary to reason. For a doctrine may be attended with great difficulties, very hard to be accounted for, and yet may be really true, and not contradictory to reason: Which is evidently the case with respect to several important principles of what is called natural religion. The difficulty attending any doctrine in our manner of conceiving it, is not a proper argument against its truth, if we have otherwise sufficient evidence to convince us that that doctrine is true. And its being plainly asserted in a revelation proved to be divine is a sufficient evidence. For to acknowledge a divine revelation to have been given, and yet receive nothing upon the credit of it, nothing but what we can prove to be true or at least highly probable independently of that revelation, is a most absurd and inconsistent conduct. It is to make a divine testimony pass for nothing, and to pay no greater regard to a thing on account of its being divinely revealed than if it had not been revealed at all. In this case what is said by a per-

son who cannot be supposed to be prejudiced in favour of Christianity appears to be very reasonable; which I shall here beg leave to repeat, though I had occasion to take notice of it before, *viz.* that “when persons have received the  
 “ Christian revelation for genuine, after sufficient examination of its external and internal proofs, and have found nothing that  
 “ makes it inconsistent with itself, nor that is repugnant to any of those divine truths, which  
 “ reason and the works of God demonstrate to them, such persons will never set up reason  
 “ in contradiction to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehensible as to  
 “ their manner of being: If they did, their reason would be false and deceitful, they  
 “ would cease to be reasonable men\*.” And elsewhere after having observed that we cannot be obliged to believe against reason, he saith, that when a revelation hath passed through the necessary trials, “it is to be received with the  
 “ most profound reverence, with the most intire submission, and with the most unfeigned  
 “ thanksgiving. Reason has exercised her whole prerogative then, and delivers us over to faith.  
 “ To believe before all these trials, or to doubt after them, is alike unreasonable†.”

And now upon such a view of things you will allow me, gentlemen, seriously to expostulate with you, and to beseech you to reflect whether in rejecting and endeavouring to expose Chri-

\* Lord Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. V. p. 384. † *Ib.* p. 279.



stianity you act a wise and reasonable part, and what is like to be the effect of your conduct both with regard to yourselves, and to the public.

And first with regard to yourselves. Consider that the case now before you is not merely a matter of indifferency, or of small importance. Your own most essential interests are nearly concerned. If the Gospel be true and divine, to reject it will involve you in the greatest guilt, and will expose you to the greatest danger. The best that can be said of your case upon such a supposition is that it is infinitely hazardous. If in fact it should be found, that you have rejected a true divine revelation which God himself hath confirmed with the most illustrious attestations; that you have refused the testimony which he hath given of his Son, and have poured contempt on the Saviour whom he hath in his infinite wisdom and love provided for us; that you have slighted the authority of his laws, and the offers of his grace, and have despised all his glorious promises, and set at nought his awful threatenings: This cannot possibly be a slight guilt, and therefore you have reason in that case to apprehend the severe effects of the divine displeasure. Whatever favourable allowances may be made to those who never heard of the Gospel, or had no opportunity of being instructed in it in its original purity, yet it is plain from the whole tenor of the Gospel-declarations, that those to whom it is  
clearly

clearly published, and who have its evidences plainly laid before them, and yet shut their eyes against the heavenly light, and despise its offered salvation, are in a very dangerous state. And though it may be said, that this is immediately to be understood of those who lived in the age when the Gospel was first published, yet it holds in proportion with regard to those in after-ages, to whom that revelation and its evidences are made known, and who yet wilfully reject it. For since God designed that revelation not merely for the age when it was first delivered, but for succeeding ages; and since accordingly it was so ordered, that both the revelation itself, its doctrines and laws, and an account of the divine attestations that were given to it, have been transmitted to us in such a manner, as layeth a just foundation for our being assured that this is the true original revelation, and that these facts were really done; then the obligation which lies upon those to whom that revelation is made known to receive and submit to it, and consequently the guilt of rejecting it, still subsists. Examine the revelation itself. Could you possibly expect a revelation given for nobler purposes, than to instruct us to form the most worthy notions of God, of his perfections, and of his providence, to set before us the whole of our duty in its just extent, to instruct us in the terms of our acceptance with God, to assure us of his readiness to pardon our iniquities, and to receive us to his grace and favour upon our unfeigned repentance,

ance, and to crown our sincere though imperfect obedience with the glorious reward of eternal life? Could any revelation be expected, whose precepts are more pure and excellent, or enforced by more weighty motives, or the uniform tendency of which is more manifestly fitted to promote the cause of virtue and righteousness in the world? Or, could any revelation, supposing a revelation really given, be attended with more illustrious attestations? Will it be an excuse fit to be offered to the great Ruler and Judge of the world, that you did not yourselves see the miracles that were wrought, nor were witnesses to the attestations that were given? This is in effect to demand, that all these facts should be done over again for your conviction, or you will not believe them. But how unreasonable is this, when the accounts of these facts are transmitted with a degree of evidence sufficient to satisfy any unprejudiced mind, an evidence which must be admitted, except no past facts at all are to be believed, and which you yourselves would account sufficient in any other case! Or, will it be accepted as a just excuse, that it contains some doctrines which are attended with great difficulties that we are not able to account for, and which relate to things that transcend our comprehension, when at the same time it cannot be denied that there are several things both in religion and philosophy which the most wise and considering men think it reasonable to believe, though they are liable to objections which they

cannot give a clear solution of\*? Or, is the true reason of your rejecting the Gospel your aversion to its holy laws, and to that purity of heart and life that is there required? But is this a reason fit to be pleaded before God, or proper to satisfy your own consciences? *This is the condemnation*, saith our Saviour, *that light is come into the world, but men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.* If this should be found to be really your case, and the true cause of your opposition to the Gospel, your guilt is of a very aggravated nature! It is to hate and oppose the light that should convince and reform you, and to make the very excellency of the Gospel a reason for rejecting it. The best and wisest men in all ages have owned the necessity of keeping the appetites and passions within proper bounds, and in a just subjection to the dominion of reason. And this is the great design of the Christian law. And yet its precepts are not carried to an unreasonable rigour and austerity: It is not designed to extinguish the passions, but to moderate them, and allows them to be gratified within the bounds of temperance and innocence. Its precepts if reduced to practice, would

\* One of the most subtil writers that have of late appeared against Christianity, says, "that no priestly dogmas ever shocked common sense so much as the infinite divisibility of matter with its consequences," which yet has not hindered the ablest mathematicians from believing it to be demonstrably true. And he gives some other instances of the like kind. See Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 346, 347.



both tend to the true dignity and perfection of our nature, and lay a just foundation for an inward tranquility and satisfaction of mind, and for a true moral liberty, the noblest liberty in the world; as no slavery is to be compared to a moral servitude, which consisteth in a vassalage to the vicious appetites and passions. A life led in conformity to the Gospel precepts, is, whatever you may think of it, the most delightful life in the world. It tendeth to improve and enlarge the social affections, to inspire an universal benevolence, to render men good and useful in every relation, and to restrain and govern those furious and malignant passions of envy, hatred, and revenge, which carry torment and bitterness in their nature. It directs us to a rational piety and devotion towards God, and tends to produce a noble and ingenuous confidence in him, and an entire resignation to his will, and to refresh and cheer the soul with a consciousness of the divine approbation. To this add the satisfactions and joys arising from all the wonders of the divine grace and goodness as display'd in the Gospel, from the charms of redeeming love, and the great things Christ hath done and suffered for our salvation, from the glorious promises of the new covenant, from the gracious aids and influences of the Holy Spirit, and from the ravishing and transporting prospects that are before us. A blessed resurrection and immortal life! You will be ready perhaps to charge this as enthusiasm. But I see no reason

for it, except the noblest emotions of the human mind, and the exercise of our best affections upon the best and most excellent objects, must pass under that name. Consider, I beseech you, what valuable privileges, what divine satisfactions, what ravishing prospects you deprive yourselves of by your infidelity! And what have you in exchange, but perplexing doubts and uncertainties, gloomy prospects, and what you will hardly be able to get intirely rid of, anxious suspicions and fears enough, where they prevail, to mar the comfort and satisfaction of life!

But let me now in the next place desire you to reflect upon what may be the consequences of your conduct with regard to the public. There are great and general complaints, and it were to be wished there was not a just foundation for them, of a dissoluteness of manners which seems to be growing among us. This is a matter in which the interests of the community are very nearly concerned. When once the corruption spreads through all orders and degrees of persons, those in higher and in lower stations, it must needs be attended with a perversion of all public order, and saps the very foundation of the public glory and happiness. In proportion as vice and dissoluteness prevails, it produces a neglect of honest industry, trade consequently decays, fraud and violence increase, the reverence of oaths is lost, and all the ties and bands that keep society together are in danger

ger of being dissolved. *Machiavel* himself has decided, that a free government cannot be long maintained, when once a people are become generally corrupt. All true friends therefore to the public order and liberty must wish that virtue may flourish, and that men's vicious appetites and passions may be kept under proper restraints. And nothing is so fit to answer this end as religion. If the influence of religion were removed from the minds of men, and there were no fear of God before their eyes, civil laws would be found feeble restraints. This the ablest politicians have been sensible of, and never was there any civilized government that did not take in religion for its support. And it may be easily proved that never was there any religion so well fitted for answering all these purposes as the Christian. The two latest writers who have appeared against Christianity have made full acknowledgements of the great usefulness of religion, especially that part of it which relateth to future rewards and punishments, to public communities: Though both of them have most inconsistently endeavoured to subvert that doctrine of future retributions, the belief of which they own to be necessary for preserving public peace and order. Mr. *Hume* speaking of the received notions, that "the Deity will inflict punishments on vice  
"and infinite rewards on virtue," says, that  
"those who attempt to disabuse them of such  
"prejudices may, for aught he knows, be good  
"reasoners,

“ reasoners, but he cannot allow them to be  
 “ good citizens and politicians; since they free  
 “ men from one restraint upon their passions, and  
 “ make the infringement of the laws of equity  
 “ and society, in one respect, more easy and  
 “ secure \*.” Lord *Bolingbroke* speaking of those  
 who “ contrived religion for the sake of govern-  
 “ ment observes, that they saw that the public  
 “ external religion would not answer their end,  
 “ nor enforce effectually the obligations of vir-  
 “ tue and morality, without the doctrine of  
 “ future rewards and punishments †.” And  
 he says, “ the doctrine of rewards and punish-  
 “ ments in a future state has so great a ten-  
 “ dency to enforce the civil laws, and to re-  
 “ strain the vices of men,” that reason which,  
 as he pretends, “ cannot decide for it on prin-  
 “ ciples of natural theology, will not decide  
 “ against it on principles of good policy ‡”  
 And it is certain, that no religion placeth those  
 future retributions in so strong and affecting a  
 light as Christianity does. The last-mentioned  
 author goes so far as to say, that “ if the con-  
 “ flict between virtue and vice in the great com-  
 “ monwealth of mankind was not maintained  
 “ by religious and civil institutions, the human  
 “ life would be intolerable ||.” And now, I  
 think, I may justly expostulate with those gen-  
 tlemen, who do what they can to propagate in-  
 fidelity among us. What real good to mankind;

\* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 231. † Bolingbroke's  
 Works, Vol. IV. p. 60. ‡ *Ib.* Vol. V. p. 322. || *Ib.* p. 227.



what benefit to the society or community can you propose by endeavouring to expose Christianity, its ministry and ordinances to contempt, and to subvert its divine authority, and thereby destroy its influence on the minds and consciences of men? Can you propose to assert and promote the cause of virtue by taking away its strongest supports, and those motives which have the greatest tendency to engage men to the practice of it? Or, can you propose to put a check to abounding licentiousness, by removing the most powerful restraints to vice and wickedness? If it be so hard to restrain the corruption of mankind, and to keep their disorderly appetites within proper bounds, even taking in all the aids of religion, and the amazing power of those motives which Christianity furnisheth, what could be expected, if all these were discarded, and men were left to gratify their passions without the dread of a supreme Governor and Judge? Surely then, however unfavourable to Christianity your private sentiments might be, you ought for the sake of the public to conceal them, if you would approve yourselves true lovers of your country, and zealous for the liberty and prosperity of it, and not take pains to propagate principles which in their consequences must have the worst influence on the peace, the welfare, and good order of the community. If what Lord *Bolingbroke* saith is true, that “no religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of man-

VOL. II. U u “kind

“ kind as the Christian religion considered as  
 “ taught by Christ and his apostles \*;” with what  
 face or consistency can these pretend to public  
 spirit, or to a concern for the public happiness,  
 who use their utmost efforts to subvert it, and  
 represent its important motives as vain bug-  
 bears? Especially how can such persons pretend  
 to be real friends to the present constitution and  
 government, which is founded on an attempt to  
 maintain Christianity in its purity as delivered  
 in the holy Scriptures, a zeal for which will al-  
 ways prove its greatest security?

I hope, gentlemen, you will forgive the free-  
 dom of this expostulatory address, which is not  
 designed to reproach you, or to return railing  
 for railing, which our holy religion forbids, but  
 proceeds from an earnest concern for your hap-  
 piness, and for promoting your best interests  
 here and hereafter, as well as from a desire, as  
 far as my ability reaches, to serve the public,  
 the welfare of which is very nearly concerned  
 in the consequences of your conduct.

I shall now beg leave to address myself to  
 those who profess to value themselves upon the  
 name of Christians; a name truly glorious, ex-  
 pressive of the most sacred obligations and en-  
 gagements, the most valuable privileges, and the  
 most sublime hopes. But the bare name of  
 Christians will be of little advantage without  
 the true spirit and practice of Christianity. And  
 it is impossible for any friend to religion and  
 to mankind to observe without a very sensible  
 concern, what numbers there are of those who

would take it ill not to be called and accounted Christians, that yet take little care to act suitably to that sacred and honourable character.

Many professed Christians there are, who scarce ever bestow a serious thought upon those things which it is the great design of the Gospel to inculcate on the hearts and minds of men. Let me desire such persons to reflect a little what an inconsistent conduct they are guilty of. To profess to believe that God hath sent his Son from Heaven with messages of grace to sinful men, and to bring discoveries of the highest importance, in which our everlasting salvation is very nearly concerned, and yet not to allow these things a place in their thoughts, and to prefer the veriest trifles before them ! Will you dare to say in words, that you do not think it worth your while to attend to what God thought fit to send his own Son to reveal ? Why then do you act as if you thought so ? No pretence of worldly business, though it is our duty to be diligent in it, can excuse an utter habitual inconsideration and neglect of those things, which, by professing to believe Christianity, we profess to believe to be of the greatest importance. Much less will a hurry of diversions be allowed to be a sufficient excuse. And yet how many are there whose time is taken up in low trifling pleasures and amusements, and who make that which at best should only be the entertainment of a vacant hour, the very business of their lives ! It is to be lamented, that this is too often the case with persons distinguished by their birth,



their fortunes and figure in the world. As if all the advantage they proposed by those shining distinctions, was only the privilege of leading idle unmeaning lives, useless to themselves, and to the community. Can reasonable creatures think that by such a constant trifling away their precious time, they answer the end of their beings, the end for which they had the noble powers of reason given them? As if they were sent into the world only to divert themselves. Much less can Christians believe that they were formed for no higher and more valuable purposes. How often are the duties of the church and closet, those of the social relations, the care of children and of families, the kind offices and exercises of a noble and generous benevolence towards the poor, the indigent, the afflicted and disconsolate, neglected and postponed, for the sake of the most trifling amusements; an immoderate fondness and attachment to which tends, even when it is least hurtful, to produce a disinclination to serious thought, and to impair the relish for that which is truly good, excellent, and improving!

But this is still worse, when what are called diversions, tend to lay snares for virtue and innocence, and open the way to scenes of dissoluteness and debauchery. Or, when what is called play and amusement is carried to such an excess as to hurt and squander away fortunes, which might be employed to the most valuable and useful purposes, and thereby disables persons of distinguished rank from the duties they owe to their families, and to the community,

from



from the exercise of generous charity and benevolence, and even of justice too. To which may be added the tendency it often hath to excite and exercise unworthy and disorderly passions, and to produce the habits of fraud, falsehood, and a base and illiberal thirst after gain.

If our own observation and experience did not convince us of it, one would scarce think there could be persons who profess to believe the Gospel, and to acknowledge its divine authority, and yet live in an habitual neglect of its public worship and sacred institutions; or if they keep up some outward form of this, indulge themselves in a practice contrary to all the rules of virtue and morality. Of all characters the most inconsistent is a wicked and vicious Christian, which to any one that is acquainted with the true nature and design of Christianity, seems to be a kind of contradiction in terms. For nothing is more evident than that a bad and dissolute life is the most manifest contradiction to the whole design of the Gospel revelation. What a strange inconsistency is it for persons to profess themselves the disciples of the holy *Jesus*, and yet to counteract the very end he came into the world for! To profess to hope for salvation from him as promised in the Gospel, and yet to neglect the necessary terms without which we are there assured salvation is not to be obtained! To believe that he came to destroy the works of the devil, and yet allow themselves in those works which he came to destroy! What an unamiable

representation do such persons make of Christianity, if a judgment were to be formed of it from their conduct and practice! You would perhaps conceive a horror at the thought of blaspheming Christ, and openly renouncing all hope of salvation from him, and yet the plain tendency of your practice is to harden the hearts of infidels, and give occasion to the enemies of Christianity to blaspheme. And should not you tremble to think of being charged as accessory to the indignities and reproaches cast on that venerable name into which you were baptized, and on that excellent system of religion, whose divine original you profess to believe? Surely then it highly concerneth you, for your own sakes and that of the Gospel, to set yourselves heartily to reform a conduct so irreconcilable to all the rules of reason, and to your own most evident interests. Implore the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and the assistances of his grace, which shall not be wanting to the truly penitent, and shew yourselves Christians, by endeavouring to get your souls effectually brought under the influence of our holy religion, the natural tendency of which, wherever it is sincerely believed and embraced, is to inspire an ingenuous hope, confidence, and joy.

I shall conclude therefore with laying a few advices before those who take upon them the name of Christians, and who profess to receive the Gospel as of divine authority.

And 1. Let us be thankful to God for our glorious privileges. It is our unspeakable advantage,  
that

that we are not left merely to the uncertain lights, or feeble conjectures of our own unassisted reason in matters of the highest importance. We have God himself instructing us by his word concerning his own glorious perfections, and his governing providence, as extending to the individuals of the human race, displaying all the riches of his grace and goodness towards perishing sinners, setting our duty before us in its just extent, and animating us to the practice of it by the most exceeding great and precious promises, and assuring us of the aids of his Holy Spirit to assist our weak endeavours. We are raised to the most glorious hopes and views. A happiness is provided for us as the reward of our patient continuance in well-doing, transcending all that we are now able to express, or even to conceive. These things certainly call for a devout admiration and adoring thankfulness, and for all the returns of love and gratitude that are in our power. Our civil liberties are justly to be valued, but our privileges as Christians are of a yet higher and nobler nature.

2dly, Another thing which naturally follows upon this is, that we should consider and improve the revelation we profess to believe, and that we should endeavour to be well acquainted with it, especially as it is contained in the holy Scriptures. There those discoveries are to be found which God was pleased to make of his will at sundry times and in divers manners, by the mouth of his holy prophets; but especially there is that last and most perfect revelation he



gave by his well-beloved Son. We are ready to think they had a mighty advantage who saw our Saviour in the flesh, who heard his excellent discourses, and were witnesses to his holy life, and to the miracles he performed. And in the sacred writings we have all these things faithfully recorded. Those very discourses which he delivered are there transmitted to us, with an account of the wonderful works he did, his most holy and useful life, and most perfect example. What a strange inconsistent conduct would it be, to profess to believe that there is a revelation given from Heaven relating to matters of the highest moment, and that this revelation is contained in the holy Scriptures, and yet to suffer the Bible to lie neglected by us, as if this which is the most worthy of all our attention, were the only book that deserved no attention at all! Let us therefore search the Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation. And if we meet with difficulties there, as may justly be expected in such antient writings, and which relate to a great variety of things, some of them of a very extraordinary nature, let not this discourage us. For besides that by a careful considering and comparing the Scriptures themselves, and making a proper use of the helps that are afforded us, we may have the satisfaction of having many of those difficulties cleared up to us, it must be observed, that those things that are most necessary to be known, and which are of the greatest importance, are there most plainly revealed, and frequently inculcated; and these things



things we should especially labour to get impressed upon our hearts and consciences.

But that which should be our principal concern, is, to take care that our whole conversation be such as becometh the Gospel of Christ, worthy of our glorious privileges and sublime hopes. He must be an utter stranger to Christianity who is not sensible that it lays us under the most sacred obligations, and gives us the greatest helps and encouragements to a holy and virtuous practice. Let us therefore, as we would secure our own salvation and happiness, and would promote the honour of our blessed Redeemer, and of the revelation he brought from Heaven, endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by all the virtues of a sober, a righteous, and godly life. A mere form of godliness will not be sufficient: The power, the energy, the beauty of religion, must appear in our whole temper and conduct. This is in a peculiar manner expected of those who are honoured with the character of the ministers of the holy *Jesus*. And when the ministers of religion are careful to govern themselves by its excellent rules, it tends to attract the veneration and esteem even of those who are apt to take all occasions to vilify that sacred order. But the Gospel is not designed merely for any particular order of men, but to extend its influence to persons of all orders and degrees. And how amiable is the idea of a Christian acting up to the obligations of Christianity!

Consider him in the exercise of piety and devotion towards God, diligent in attending on the

ordinances of religion, filled with a profound reverence of the divine Majesty, with a devout admiration of the supreme original Goodness and Excellence, his soul rising in grateful emotions towards his sovereign Benefactor, exercising an unrepining submission and resignation to his will, and a steady dependence on his providence, rejoicing in Christ Jesus as his Saviour and Lord, in the beauties of his example, and in the wonders of his love.

But the religion of a real Christian is not confined to immediate acts of devotion. It influenceth and animateth his whole conduct. It teacheth him to render unto all their dues, to be strictly just and generously honest, to behave suitably in every relation, the *conjugal*, *parental*, and *filial* relation; and to fulfil the duties of the *civil* and *social* life. It tendereth to suppress the bitter and malevolent affections, and to diffuse a sweetness and complacency through his whole behaviour. It maketh him ready to bear with the infirmities of others, to rejoice in their happiness, and endeavour to promote it, and instead of *being overcome with evil, to overcome evil with good*.

Behold him in another view, as exercising a noble self-government, keeping his appetites and passions under a proper discipline, and in a regular subjection to the laws of religion and reason, disdaining to dishonour and defile his body and soul with unclean lusts, and vicious excesses, yet not unreasonably austere, but allowing himself the chearful use of the innocent pleasures and enjoyments of life, and every enjoyment

joyment heightened by the glorious prospects which are before him. To which it may be added, that religion tends to inspire him with a true sense of honour, as that signifieth an abhorrence of every thing base, false, unjust, and impure, and with a real greatness of soul, and a noble constancy and fortitude, not to be *bribed* or *terrified* from his duty.

Such a character, even in a low condition, as far as it hath an opportunity of exerting itself, cannot but attract the approbation and esteem of those that observe it. But when it is found in conjunction with NOBILITY OF EXTRACTION, DIGNITY OF STATION, SPLENDOR and AFFLUENCE of fortune, what a glory does it diffuse! And it gives a real pleasure to every friend to Christianity among us to reflect, that of this we have an illustrious instance in a PERSON of the most exalted dignity, but who is still more distinguished by her *Princely* and *Christian* virtues, than by the *eminency* of her station. We have here a shining proof, what a just and general esteem and admiration, solid rational piety, a well-regulated zeal for Christianity, and a life amiably conducted by its sacred rules, in a condition so elevated, has a natural tendency to create, and what a *splendor* and *beauty* it adds to the highest *titles* and *dignities*. And if persons distinguished by their RANK and FIGURE in life were more generally careful to copy after so *bright* a pattern, it is to be hoped, this might happily contribute to reform the licentiousness of the age: And that the influence of their authority



thority and example would extend to those in inferior stations, and have a general good effect ; particularly that it would tend to cure that *false* and *vicious shame*, which has so often discouraged persons from openly avowing their regard and adherence to that which is the ornament and glory of our nature, religion and virtue.

It is proper to observe in the last place, that those who have any true zeal for Christianity, and who really believe it to be the most excellent religion, are bound by every obligation to endeavour to promote it in their own families, by carefully training up their children to an early acquaintance with this holy religion, and veneration for it. It is of great consequence to endeavour to season their young and tender minds with its important principles, and to inspire them with a just reverence of things sacred, with a love of goodness and virtue, and an abhorrence of what is base, false, and impure. A careful education of children will lay the best foundation for well-regulated families ; as these will contribute, the most of any thing, to the peace and good order of the community.

I shall conclude this Address with the admirable words of St. Paul : *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*

F I N I S.







